

Marygrove

EX LIBRIS





Photo Giraudon

CARMONTELLE—Mlle. de Lespinasse in 1760

THE WOMAN OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

*Her Life, from birth to death, her Love
and her Philosophy in the worlds of
Salon, Shop and Street*

BY

EDMOND & JULES DE GONCOURT

TRANSLATION BY

JACQUES LE CLERCQ & RALPH ROEDER



MINTON, BALCH & COMPANY
NEW YORK : : : : 1927

COPYRIGHT, 1927, BY
MINTON, BALCH & COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America by
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BIRTH—THE CONVENT—MARRIAGE . . .	3
II. SOCIETY—THE SALONS	31
III. THE PLEASURES OF SOCIETY	70
IV. LOVE	97
V. MARRIED LIFE	141
VI. THE WOMAN OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES . .	160
VII. THE WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE—THE FILLE GALANTE	180
VIII. BEAUTY AND THE MODE	204
IX. THE DOMINATION AND INTELLIGENCE OF WOMAN	243
X. THE SOUL OF WOMAN	267
XI. WOMAN IN HER OLD AGE	297
XII. THE PHILOSOPHY AND DEATH OF WOMAN	341



ILLUSTRATIONS

CARMONTELLE—Mlle. de Lespinasse in 1760 . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
BAUDOIN—Le Coucher de la Mariée	22
SAINT-AUBIN—Le Bal paré	32
OLIVIER—La Cour du Prince de Conti et Mozart	38
LAVREINCE—L'Assemblée au salon	62
OLIVIER—Le Souper du Prince de Conti au Temple en 1766	110
JEAURAT—L'Exemple des Mères	146
CHARDIN—Le Bénédicité	164
VERNET—Marchande d'Eau de vie	182
CARMONTELLE—Mesdames les Comtesses de Fitz-James et du Nolestin	234
CARMONTELLE—Madame la Comtesse d'Egmont	254
CARMONTELLE—Madame d'Esclavelles, niece of Madame d'Epinay, playing chess with M. de Linant, her nurse watching	312



THE WOMAN OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE WOMAN OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

BIRTH—THE CONVENT—MARRIAGE

THE BIRTH OF a girl in the eighteenth century is no welcome event for her family. The house holds no holiday at her coming; her parents know no rapture of triumph; she is a blessing accepted as a disappointment. For in a world, remember, ruled by the Salic law, she is not the answer to their prayers and their hopes; she is not the heir destined to prolong the name, the fortunes, and the honors of the family; no, the newcomer is merely a girl, and as such, before the cradle that contains nothing but a woman's future, the father stands unmoved and the mother grieves like a Queen who had looked for a Dauphin.

Presently a nurse comes and carries off the child; and not until Greuze and Aubry paint the day does her mother even visit her. When the little girl leaves her nurse and comes home, she is handed to a governess and lodged with her in an attic chamber. The governess sets to work to make a little lady of her charge, but gently, with no end of spoiling and flattery; for in her pupil, whom she never scolds and whom she indulges in well-nigh every fancy, she is already nursing a mistress who is to leave her, on the day of her marriage, a small fortune. She teaches her to read and write. She shows her the pictures in a Bible by Sacy. She gives her a notion of geography, peeping at the world

in a pretty optic glass, and the world, as you see, consists of the interior of Saint Peter's, the Fountain of Trevi, and the Cathedral of Milan with its myriads of little figures; the new church of Saint Genevieve, patroness of Paris; the church of Saint Paul; the new palace of Sans-Souci, and the Hermitage of the Empress of Russia. She slips in her hand some *Notions of a Father* or of a *Mother for a Daughter*, some *Treatise on the Nature of True Merit*. She recommends her to hold her head high, and to bob a bow right and left; and this is about all that the governess teaches the child.

In the pictures of the eighteenth century we see this little girl, this infant vanity, holding her head high, high and heavy, under a pad nodding with plumes or a bonnet trimmed with a ribbon, a flower idling over the ear. Little girls wear large aprons, of diaphanous *tulle*, with transparent embroidery, hinting at the pink or blue peek-a-boo of a silk skirt beneath. They have magnificent baubles, rattles of gold, of silver, of coral, of cut crystal; they stand sentinel over opulent playthings, dolls with hectically painted cheeks of wood, larger often than they are, and which they can hardly hold in their little arms.¹ Sometimes, in a formal garden, we see them wheeling each other on a pebbled alley in tiny chariots, modeled in rock-crystal on those sea-shells of Venus, which drift through the paintings of Boucher.² They are invariably beribboned and be-dizened, laden with knots and nosegays and silver lace: their costume is a miniature of their mothers' in its pomp and splendor. The merest concession, in the morning, is that little morning-gown called an *habit de marmotte* (*sleepy-head's bib*) or *Savoyarde*, a pretty bodice of brown taffeta with a short skirt to match, trimmed with two or

¹The *Mercure de France*, in its number of July, 1772, carries the announcement of a gift made by the Duchesse d'Orléans to the Infanta of a doll with assorted wardrobe and a toy toilette worth 22,000 pounds.

²See his portraits of children in the Museum of Versailles; also the engraving by Joulain after Coypel: O moments trop heureux où règne l'innocence.

three bands of pink ribbon, and a head-dress equally plain and pretty made of a knot of veiling tied under the chin; a really charming costume, in which the child is clearly at ease, her freshness well set off, her grace free and unhampered. But to this costume the parents are far from partial: they prefer their little ones prettified in the taste of the day, a taste which imposes on them, as soon as they walk, a corset of whalebone, a ceremonial costume, and gives them a master to move by, another to dance to. Turn to an engraving by Canot and see the little tot striking an attitude, demurely, like a lady, arching her arms and plucking her billowing dress, as the master repeats: "In step . . . Steady . . . Forward . . . Turn now . . . Too late . . . Arms free . . . Head high . . . Turn, I say, turn, Mademoiselle . . . The head a hint higher . . . A flowing pace . . . More assurance in the expression . . ."

To make the child play the lady—that, in a word, is the whole aim of the education of the eighteenth century. It is a system which frowns on all levity, on every natural impulse, on childhood itself: it stunts the character as it thwarts the body. It spurs the child unsparingly beyond her years. She goes, say, for her walk to the Tuileries; and (as if her bustle were not beadle enough) she is told not to frolic, not to romp, but to walk gravely. Or she is a godmother—lucky child! one of her great ambitions, her first appearance in public—and she enters her coach, like a lady, with plumes in her hair, pearls at her throat, and on her left shoulder a posy. A day will come, too, when she is danced off to her ball; for a woman must be formed from the cradle for the world she is to live in, the pleasures which are to be her life; and then on her head is set a huge cushion called a *toque*, built up with rats and pins into a monstrous *hérisson*, or *prickly-hog*, crowned with a top-heavy hat; she is harnessed with a new hoop, crammed with horsehair and looped with steel; she is saddled with a gown festooned with wreaths, and marched off to her ball with a "Mind now, not to rub off your *rouge* or muss your hair

or crease your gown, and be sure you enjoy yourself, my pet!"

Thus are formed those mannered little maids, who pass on a mode, decide on a dress, and flaunt a killing air: darlings so dainty, one whiff is caution they will never abide a lady unscented or minus her patch.

From the little rooms, where she lives with her governess, the little girl comes down to her mother for a moment only, in the morning, at eleven, when, in the vague light of the half-drawn blinds, dogs and dependents are admitted. "La! What a face!" mother meets daughter with, as she bids her good morning. "What ails the child? Go, put on some *rouge* . . . No . . . Let be . . . You shall not stir from the house to-day . . ." Then, to a visitor: "I dote on that child. Come, kiss me, my sweet. Ah, Lud, you are filthy. Go, brush your teeth. No, I'll not be plagued with questions to-day; no; you are a trial, child!"—"Ah, Madame, was ever a tenderer mother?" sighs the visitor. "I dare say, I dare say," sighs the mother. "But I dote on that child."

Other meeting, other communion there is none between mother and daughter than this banal and formal interview, opened and closed as a rule by a kiss, which the little girl tucks under her mother's chin, where it will not blur her *rouge*. We may look in vain, over a long period of years, for any trace of maternal training, of that first fond training, when lessons come by kisses and lisping questions are enlightened with a laugh and a *Whoops-my-dear* for answer. No. These little souls do not develop at their mothers' knees. These mothers know no endearing ties to knit the child anew to the flesh that is hers, and lay up for the years of decline a daughter's friendship. They have no tender spells with which to woo confidence and affection. No. Their brow is severe, hard, and fault-finding, and of that aspect they show themselves jealous; deeming it their duty to preserve, with the child, ever the dignity of a kind of indifference. Soon they take on, in their daugh-

ter's eyes, the semblance of an almost formidable power, a dread presence she dare not address. Fear comes, where only respect should be. She grows shy; her bruised affections shrink; her heart closes. And the symptoms of that fear become, as the child advances in years, so marked and so pertinent, that at last the parents observe it and are alarmed and dismayed by it. Then we find the mother and even the father, afflicted and bewildered by the harvest they have sown, enjoining their daughter to efface the *shrinking* she shows in her filial affection. The *shrinking*: I find this repulsive word in the letter of a father to his daughter.

The child has now learned what little her governess had to teach her. She can read, she can write; she knows her catechism. She has had dancing lessons. A singing master has taught her an air or two. At seven, her fingers have been plied to the clavichord. Her home training is over; and now she is sent to the convent.

The convent; we must not take this word too literally nor its usual connotations for granted, if we are to form a correct idea of the convent in the eighteenth century, if we are, that is, to conceive it historically. Let us attempt then, now that the young girl enters its portals, to trace a picture of this school and domicile of the young women of the time. Let us recall, if we may, its cloistered air, invaded incessantly by the winds of the world, by the breath of temporal concerns. Let us seek its spirit, as one seeks the spirit of a place, in its frowning walls, where windows have opened, balconies grown, fireplaces nestled, and ceilings spread to hide the stout beams; where cornices, copings, double doors and gilded panels are encroaching; where sculpture, gilding, and fine locksmith's work cast over the past the opulence and taste of the day; for such is the true picture of the convent, the symbol of all those religious retreats, which seem to have inherited from the Abbaye de Chelles the pleasures, music, modes and futile arts and the entire hubbub of pretty vanities, with which the good Abbess filled her convent.

The convent at this time is widely frequented. It meets all manner of social requirements. In many cases it safeguards the proprieties. It is not merely a house of grace: it offers innumerable advantages of a more human nature as well. Here a widow, like the Duchess de Choiseul, may retire to liquidate her husband's debts; or, like the Marquise de Créqui, a mother comes to economize and recoup her children's fortune. The convent is an institution of safe-keeping. In one of its cells sits Emilie, dainty jade, stolen from the Opera by her jealous lover, Fimarcon; in others the mistresses of princes, waiting to be married. Wives separated from their husbands come here to live. The convent welcomes women like Madame du Deffand or Madame Doublet, who are looking for large quarters, easy rates, and a quiet life. It offers lodgings for "retreats," for those devotional sojourns favored, at certain seasons of the year, by the great ladies reared within its walls: a mental reservation, as it were, from the world, a brooding return to the scenes, memories and God of their youth, which inspired Laclos with that fine scene of Madame de Tourvel's death in the room where her childhood had been lived.

Now all these worldings, all this mundane life, in invading the cloister had greatly affected the rigor of the rule. The rubric inscribed on the pediment of the *Nouvelles Catholiques*, *Vincit mundum fides nostra*, was no more than a dead letter: the world had set foot in the cloister. The guests, who were a kind of microcosm of that world and its ways, were lodged usually, it is true, in a wing apart from the convent itself. But between their quarters and the cloister the distance was short, far too short for echoes and communication not to pass to and fro. Then too, the lay sisters, charged with the functioning of the house indoors and out, relayed the hum of the world into that convent already attuned to temporal echoes and pealing blandly to the voice of Sophie Arnould singing vespers at the *Panthé-mont*. The frequent leaves of the inmates brought back a periodic forage of fashion. The world found its way in

in the wake of those youthful inmates, married at twelve or thirteen, who were placed there to await their coming of age.¹ Even the parlor, where the poet Fuzelier was welcome to read his verses, had lost its once forbidding character; it was no longer rigorously, religiously guarded; the gossip of town and court entered, undenied. The life of Paris and Versailles found here an immediate echo. Whoever or whatever would might knock and enter. The ban had no power to stay the thoughts of the world, or the ambitions or the sleepless vigils, or the fevered dreams of the future; nay, it could hardly prevent their execution. One has only to recall the scheme of Mademoiselle de Nesle, later Madame de Vintimille, that deep-laid, long-drawn, highly-pledged scheme of filching the King from Madame de Mailly, a whole elaborate plot conceived and calculated in the court of a convent by a little girl, who sat there weighing the Court, computing Louis XV, and surveying Versailles—the promised land! What further proof is needed of the little isolation, moral or spiritual, afforded by the cloister? Yet there is another case, quite as strange; it is that of a book, *Les Confidences d'une Jolie Femme*, composed, if you please, by a young girl upon leaving the convent of *Panthémont*. Befriended by Mademoiselle de Rohan, later the beautiful Comtesse de Brionne, Mademoiselle d'Albert delved into the confidences of her friend and from the items purveyed her, and indeed from everything she heard about her, gained an acquaintance so detailed and truthful with the world of Paris and Versailles, that her book seemed to have been written from life; and the people portrayed in it were quite recognizable enough to send her for several months to the Bastille.

Is there not, however, another side of convent life? Is

¹ In *Les Bijoux indiscrets* we read that it was customary to marry children at an age when they should have been given dolls to play with. This holds true of a host of marriages. We meet in the convent the oldest daughter of Madame de Genlis, married at twelve to Monsieur de la Woestine, and the Marquise de Mirabeau, widow of the Marquis de Sauveboeuf at the age of thirteen.

there not in its secret cells a muffled wail of broken hearts? a moaning of captive souls? the torment and despair of an unwilling sisterhood? Novels have bespoken our compassion for maidens sacrificed to their brothers' careers, beleaguered, beset and harried by the ghostly sisters from their fourteenth year onward, and forced, on the accomplishment of their sixteenth, to assume the vows. But novels are not history, and we must try to restore the truth, where sentiment has so long prevailed. Unquestionably the old order, like the law of Nature, was solely concerned with the preservation of the family and the continuation of the race; unquestionably, in its indifference to the individual, it authorized great abuses and grave injustices against the rights and even the persons of women. There were, undoubtedly, cases of oppression, instances of sacrifice. Young girls intended by Nature for any life but that of the veil, girls whose every instinct led them away from the cloister, whose hearts craved a husband and a child, were sometimes condemned to the cloister by an obdurate family, an unfeeling mother, and lived out their lives there, mourning a vanished dream. But these cases of extorted vows are singularly rare; they are in fundamental contrast with the normal habits and the whole tone and temper of the time. And in certain *Mémoires* we find daughters resisting the categorical commands of their parents and vindicating their refusal to take the veil by a victory. Moreover, the severity of the parents, far more a matter of habit and design than of nature and temper, wanes with every passing day. And when La Harpe reads in the *salons* of Paris his *Mélanie*, inspired, his friends say, by the suicide of a young inmate of the *Assumption*, these unwilling nuns are merely a theatrical fiction; their extorted vows are no more than a dramatic theme.

If we discard then the tirades of the moralist and the traditions of romance, we shall see the convent as a refuge rather than a prison. It is above all the haven of broken lives, the almost obligatory asylum of women suffering from

small-pox, a malady all but forgotten to-day, but one which disfigured a good quarter of the women of that time. Society, with every argument at its command, and the family, with every conceivable exhortation, urged the victim of this scourge toward the obscurity of the cloister. Even her mother consented, out of love, to surrender her luckless child, whose unsightliness excluded her from society and who ended by submitting to the pitiless precept of the time—"An ill-favored woman is a being without state in Nature or place in the world." Some two hundred thousand *laidérons* (foul faces), as the Prince de Ligne calls them, thus shrouded their vanity and consoled their pride with the prerogatives of a conventual life, with the honors and benefits of an abbey.

There is, however, another order of vows more in keeping with the spirit of the time and more often met with: facile, almost modish pledges, that add merely the luster of a religious life to a woman's wardrobe. A certain number of young women of birth were in the habit of joining orders, which required no formal or even conditional vows, orders which allowed them to live in the world and wear its dress and gave them occasionally a title or, at least, an honorary designation of some sort. These were the canonesses; their most celebrated chapter, that of Remiremont in Alsace, was founded to harbor the best blood of the royal houses and the most illustrious names in the Christian world. In this canonical order, divided into *dames nièces* and *dames tantes* (*mother-nieces* and *mother-aunts*) all of whom had taken their vows and were obliged to reside two out of three years in the chapter, the novice found connections, friendship and patronage; and the custom being for each *aunt* to sponsor or *be-niece* a novice, the latter could expect to inherit her aunt's furniture, her jewelry, her little house and her prebendary. Madame de Genlis has told us of her initiation into the noble chapter of Alix de Lyons, when she was yet a small child. She pictures herself standing, in a white gown, among the assembled canonesses dressed

in the garb of the world in robes of black silk with *paniers* and full ermine sleeves. She kneels before the priest and recites her *Credo*; the priest cuts a mesh of hair and pins on her a small strip of black and white material, of the length of a finger, known as a *mari* or *bridegroom*. About her neck he hangs an enameled cross on a red ribbon and about her waist a girdle made of a broad band of black watered silk. Thus invested, she makes a pretty picture of pride, thrilling in her seven year old vanity to be addressed by the title of a canoness—*Madame* or *Comtesse*.

Yes, your historian, you see, must constantly pry away prejudices, reconsider the facts, and reëstablish the true nature of these religious communities, their manners, principles, and purposes. The novelist has travestied and distorted the whole subject. He has begun by peopling the convent of the eighteenth century with victims of forced vows—though fugitives from that convent were harbored by the Archbishop of Paris himself—and ended by packing it with scandals. Out comes the story, out comes the print, of a postchaise waiting by night at the foot of the convent wall; up goes the ladder, down comes the lady, faint for a lover; while overhead rides the hussy, astride on the wall. Smuggled letters; and lovers disguised as porters; intrigues spun in the parlor; lay sisters tinkering with Tophet and the grille; and abductions at the point of the pistol—these unflinching effects and Casanova-like scenes seem so many illustrations of Bussy's principle that "you must, you must abduct; first, for love of the maid, second, for love of her parents, and lastly, for love of their goods, when they die."

Now nothing could be more untrue, more at variance with the facts, than this point of view. The scandals of the eighteenth century are known and numbered, and the list contains but few names. In an age when married women were so helpless, the lapses of unmarried girls, and particularly of those who were well-born, are conspicuously few. Rousseau has remarked, and not he alone, that they are inconsistent with the habits of the time. Moreover,

an abduction was no mean offense—far otherwise. Its consequences were of a character to deter the hardiest, to cool the rashest and the most lovelorn. A warning example for the assiduous was the terrible fate of Monsieur de la Roche-Courbon, condemned to the block in 1737 for carrying off Mademoiselle de Moras from the convent of Notre Dame de la Consolation. His mother died of grief, and he himself, driven from Sardinia, where he had sought refuge with his uncle, Monsieur de Sennecterre, the French Ambassador, perished miserably.¹

The leading convent of the eighteenth century, after that of Fontevrault,² the home of the princesses of the blood, was the convent of *Panthémont*, a princely cloister in the rue de Grenelle. Here the princesses received their education, and here the highest nobility sent their daughters, hoping from the association and intimacy with a *Serene Highness* some favor, some privilege, some position as lady-in-waiting in the household of the future princess. Such is the case, for instance, of Madame de Barbantane, who placed her daughter with the Duchesse de Bourbon with an eye to a living as lady-in-honor to the Duchess. Next to this convent, which is an epitome of the world and the court, where the young girl, with her governess and her maid, leads a life and receives an education of a highly special character, comes another much favored by the nobility and frequented by pupils of illustrious origin: the convent of the *Présentation*. Around these two houses and immediately below them are grouped all the other religious com-

¹The priest who had bestowed the nuptial blessing and who narrowly escaped the galleys, was condemned to the *amende honorable* and to exile; while the maid who had accompanied Mademoiselle de Moras was sentenced to be whipped, branded, and banished for nine years.

²The education of the Daughters of France at Fontevrault is illustrated by a pretty story, which shows how all-powerful were their caprices. A dancing master is rehearsing with Madame Adélaïde a dance known as the *ballet couleur de rose*. The young princess desires that it be known as the *blue minuet* and declines to take her lesson on any other condition. *Pink*, cries the master, *blue*, cries the princess, stamping her foot; the crisis is serious; and the community is assembled to judge of it. With one accord it is ruled that the minuet be de-baptised and known forever after as *blue*.

munities open to pupils, each of which seems to have had its own following drawn from a district of Paris or an order of the State.¹ Take, for example, the *Ladies of Saint Mary of the rue Saint-Jacques*. The leaders of the magistracy and the banking world appropriated this convent for their children; and though it was less exalted than the *Panthémont* or the *Présentation*, it enjoyed great favor and esteem in the eyes of the public for the superiority of its instruction.

In discipline, education, and domestic *régime*, the rule of these convents is merely an imitation, often a relaxation, of the rule of Saint-Cyr. Everywhere we find the spirit and inspiration of that model house, the trace of its division into four forms distinguished, according to age, by ribbons—blue, yellow, green and red. In all we see an education half secular, half devout, pursuing the world and renouncing it, an education that lends one hand to God and the other to a dancing master, one ear to meditation and one to a lesson in ceremony; and is not its nature sufficiently proclaimed by the costume of the adepts, which is partly a nun's, partly a lady's? The hood and gown are of brown bunting of Mans, but the gown has a hoop; on the head is a white cloth, but the cloth is of lace. The headdress, to be sure, must be simple and seemly; but nothing forbids its arrangement in the style of the day.

It was, after all, a happy and congenial education that was provided in these convents, constantly enlivened and emancipated with every passing day more and more from the chill and gloom of the cloister, until gradually it inclines almost wholly toward the world, toward everything which

¹ In *L'Etat de la ville de Paris, 1757*, we find the prices of lodgings in the convents of Paris. They run from 400 to 600 pounds, but there was also the maid to be paid, an item of 300 pounds, besides the *trousseau*, the bed, and the closet in certain convents; heat and lighting were not included, and in all the laundering of fine linen was at the parents' expense. In all there were both ordinary and superior board; at the *Panthémont*, the most expensive, the former was of 600 pounds, while the latter amounted to 800. At the close of the century, Thierry says that ordinary board was at 800 pounds, and that 1000 pounds were charged for pupils who sat at the table of the Abbess.

makes for the charm and grace of women in society. It is not uncommon to see women returning to this springtide of their lives as to a memory sweet with the delights of their childhood. The pursuit of studies begun at home, the visits of the masters, dancing lessons, music lessons, singing lessons, gave zest and occupation to their days, the monotony of which was relieved by so many *fêtes*, the length of which was tempered by so many frolics. There was embroidery, there was knitting, or else some housekeeping, or some dainty to be nibbled, or a convent cake to be baked, like those lemon loaves the children sent home to their parents on certain days. Now and then there were charming rewards, such as the leave to attend midnight mass, a reward for good conduct given to the little girls, which gave them a place beside the older ones. And for punishments the good sisters meted out one of those terrible penalties, which made Mademoiselle de Raffeteau vow, after her first experience, never to incur another. The case is ingenious. Her mother had left her on her death bed, as a sacred trust, the care of an old paralytic woman whom she had supported; this poor woman was brought once a week, in a *chaise*, to the outer parlor, and there the young girl tended her devoutly, cutting her nails, bathing her and combing her hair. On days when Mademoiselle de Raffeteau was in bad grace at the convent, the delight of this labor of charity was denied her—her heart was chastened.

Even in the eighteenth century the education of women in the convent came in for criticism. Yet what was it, in effect? Merely the normal training of a young girl, as a judicious woman of the day describes it: "A measure of religious instruction, and the accomplishments proper to the condition of a woman who is to live her life in the world and maintain a position there, though only a domestic one." These are the principles deemed proper by Madame de Créqui for the education of a daughter, and it is the vindication of that conventual schooling, which bred women of

whom it was said, and well said, that "they knew everything, though they had learned nothing."

The great drawback of this system lay by no means in the lessons of the convent, not, as has so often been said, in the inadequacy of the instruction or the inability of the nuns to form a woman for her social responsibilities. It lay rather in the separation of mother and daughter, in a seclusion from the world open to all the voices of the world, which were constantly bringing in its temptations. The young girl had been taken at a tender age from the brilliant life of her home; the glimpse she had caught of it was like a child's dream; and it was as a dream that the memory of that *salon* and its festivities recurred to her during her school days. Silence and peace lay all about her, and from them she fled in imagination in pursuit of her memories and her longings. Her fancy was fired by whatever she could learn or divine of life outside the convent. The things she had seen on her occasional visits, the pleasures, the homage offered by men to women, pulsed in her brain, haunted her thoughts, excited her impatience, troubled her nights. Had she been reared in her home, the facility of those pleasures and the daily sight and usage of society would soon have allayed her curiosity and moderated those ardors, which proved most wayward, among the young women of the eighteenth century, in the graduates of the convent.

Marriage normally followed hard on the close of the convent term, with a husband chosen by her family. For marriage, of course, was primarily a family matter, determined by the parents on grounds of rank and fortune. The choice had been made long beforehand, and the young girl, who was not consulted, learned that she was soon to be married mainly by the unwonted stir in the house, by the coming and going of milliners and tailors, by the accumulation of materials and laces and flowers, by the labors of seamstresses on her *trousseau*. What was her wooing, what the assiduity of the wooer, we know by the comedies of the time, their

frivolity, their swaggering flippancy and airy impatience. "Ah, thank me, you may!" says he. "You are charming, but 'tis not from me you shall hear it . . . Your gown . . . as artful as ever I saw . . . And that lace . . . of a right favor, of a . . . Tut! say no more on it . . . When are we to be tied?"¹ Indeed, Mercier charges the comic writers with gross fatuity, or rather with impudent historical mendacity, for portraying on the stage even the flimsiest courtship, for do we not all know that the young ladies of the nobility and even of the upper middle classes never left their convents until their marriage, and left them then only for that purpose?² Moreover, to appreciate properly the precipitation with which a marriage was concluded, the manner of its negotiation and settlement by the grandparents, and the little part which the young lady's tastes and aversions played in it, we have only to turn to a very curious document, every whit as eloquent as a scene and as vivid as a picture, from which we may form a complete idea of the way in which the husband was introduced to his future wife and of the time allowed her to make his acquaintance, to love and to be loved by him; this document is the account of the marriage of Madame d'Houdetot.

Monsieur de Rinville has come to propose to Monsieur de Bellegarde a husband for his daughter Mimi in the person of one of his distant cousins, who is said to be a good match. As Monsieur de Bellegarde is an excellent father and wishes above all "to see his daughter suited"—a set phrase—a day is named, and Mimi well primed (for Mimi unprimed is blind) a dinner is given by Madame de Rinville, where all the Rinviles and the d'Houtetots under

¹ The Plays of Marivaux, *Le Petit-Maitre corrigé*.

² See, in the *Tableaux des Moeurs du temps*, by de la Popelinière, the account of an interview in the convent parlor between a man and the young girl he is to marry in a week. Her mother says: "All things have been settled between him and myself; it only remains to sign the articles, betroth you, and lead you to the altar. I mean to leave you at most four or five days more in this convent; during that time, which I am pleased yet to grant you, I shall expect you to grant the Comte de ** an hour every day in this parlor, that you may be the better acquainted."

Heaven foregather. First, Madame d'Houdetot impresses the Bellegardes with a kiss tentatively engraved on all those who bear that name. Then they sit down to meat, Mimi with young d'Houdetot, Monsieur de Rinville and the Marquise d'Houdetot flanking Monsieur de Bellegarde; and with the sweets marriage is served in. Coffee and the servants dispatched, "Gad!" cries old Monsieur de Rinville genially, "we may speak now. A fig for secrecy! We are acquainted. Yes or no is soon said. Come. Here's the lad. What say you? And here's the maid. What says she? Yes or no. And with that we've our item drawn. Our young Count, I dare swear, is enamoured already; and for your daughter, if she can do with him, let her say so. Come, my dear daughter, my dear grand-daughter, if Heaven will have it so, say so." Mimi blushes. And Madame d'Esclavelles rising remonstrative and begging for breath: "True," he proceeds. "True! You speak like a woman of sense. Best begin with the articles, and our young friends in the meanwhile shall converse.—Well said, aye, well said, aye, very well said!" And they return to the drawing-room. There Monsieur de Rinville squares himself to say that the Marquis d'Houdetot gives his son an income of 18,000 pounds a year from his estates in Normandy; and the Marquise d'Houdetot, bracing herself, adds "all her diamonds, and fine ones they are, and she shall have every last one, every sparkler she can lay her hands on." Monsieur de Bellegarde replies with a dower of 300,000 pounds and a share in the inheritance. They rise. "Agreed. We'll sign the contract to-night, publish the banns on Sunday, obtain a dispensation for the others, and hold the wedding on Monday." The notary and the family are informed, and that same evening sees them once more at Monsieur de Bellegarde's, where, amid the constraint of both families (as yet totally unacquainted) the articles are signed. While the contract is drawing, the Marquis d'Houdetot hands Mademoiselle de Bellegarde her wedding gift, two sets of diamonds, the value of which remains blank in

the contract, because, of course, there had not been time as yet to have them priced. The contract is signed; they sit down to table, and the wedding is set for the following Monday.¹

To this improvised match, which gives us a clear picture of a marriage of the time, Mademoiselle de Bellegarde thought no more of objecting than would any other young girl of that day. She lent herself to it obligingly. We must bear in mind the extreme youth, childhood almost, at which young girls were married, an age without will or mind of its own; the severity of affection, devoted no doubt but never familiar or demonstrative, of their mothers; and the dread of returning to the convent: all factors which explain their ready submission, their impulsive consent, which hardly waited on an introduction. Then too, it was marriage, not the man, that tempted them. They accepted a husband for the position he assured them, the life he opened to them, the luxuries and vanities he would allow them. Madame d'Houdetot admits as much; one day, a trifle flurried by the wine her neighbor at table had been drinking, she confides to Diderot her maiden secret in this naïve confession: "I married, that I might live and go to the Ball, the Opera, the Promenade and the Play." Another woman, Madame de Puisieux, repeats the substance of this confession, admitting that the inducements of a gilded coach, a handsome livery, fine diamonds, and good horses, were ample to have made her marry the most unprepossessing of suitors, so only she be allowed her coach and diamonds, her *rouge* and silken slippers.

So the formula drones once or twice through the echoing church: "There is promise of marriage between the High and Mighty Lord . . . and the High and Mighty Demoiselle . . . minor, of this parish . . .;" and meanwhile the engraver, whose mission it is to adorn all the transactions of life with a little poesy, sits down to embroider the invitations with mythological allegories.

¹ Mémoires et Correspondance de Madame d'Épinay. Paris. 1818. Vol. I.

On the eve of the marriage her friends and family visit her, to count, criticize and admire the wedding gifts, complete but for the purse—this, as we see in an engraving by Eisen,¹ the groom gives the bride with his own hand, in a pretty little pouch, after the ceremony of the contract. On the day of the wedding the bride, in nuptial low-neck, in full panoply of patches, *rouge*, and orange blossoms, is led out in silver slippers with diamond buckles, groping, over the silver globe of her gown glistening with brilliants and mother-of-pearl, for the fingertips of her two *chevaliers de main*, or *knights of the person*. Those fingertips have beckoned her from her mirror, blurred with her last maiden sigh; and now she “enters the temple, cleaving a crowd humming with her praises, of which she loses not a syllable, and pronounces an *aye*, of which she feels neither the sense nor the obligations.”² Sometimes, for greater pomp, night was chosen for the ceremony. Then the wedding would be held, as was that of Samuel Bernard’s daughter with the President Molé in the church of Saint-Eustache, at a midnight mass, illumined with lusters, *girandoles*, and brackets, by the light of six hundred tapers—a mass, which required a hundred watchmen at the doors.

Mass over, the two families met for a formal dinner, where the rather lively humor of the time, true to the robust mirth of old, played cruelly with the bride’s modesty. There too poetry functioned in nuptial hymns, the best of which appeared in the *Mercur*e or the *Nouvelles Secrètes*. Then, usually, the couple took their leave; for it was the custom to consummate the marriage on a family estate. The bride, in obedience to a custom still observed at the time, embraced all the women present and gave each, with the smack, a sack and a fan; and, her duty done, set off with her husband.

¹ *L’Accord du mariage*, by Eisen, engraved by Gaulard.

² The fashionable bride was not always married in white. The album of *Modes et Costumes français dessinés d’après nature* published by Esnauts and Rapilly, shows us a young bride going to the altar in a wide gown of Pekin sky-blue silk trimmed with gauze and white flowers.

Beyond this point, in any other age, record and history would pause. But the art of the eighteenth century is nothing if not indiscreet; it respects no mystery in a woman's life, and it seems never to have found a door closed. So it spares us no detail of the bridal night.¹ We see, in a pretty wash drawing, the young wife arrayed for the night, one knee on the open bed, her eyes wet with tears; the brush dips in them, discovers her lord at her knees, hugging them hard in an attitude of entreaty; with another dip brings out, behind her, a maid to hearten and brace her; and, in retiring, it dries itself in the tapers glowing on brackets on either side of the mirror, where another maid holds the snuffer poised. Rest easy, however: the painter is a sly dramatist. As Diderot paints the scene, it is yet more credible: he lends innocence but one meager tear, and his unwatered pen leads her bedward, unblushing and unattended, in the arms of the Night.²

The stay of the young couple in the country was short. The wife lost no time in posting back to Paris. There were visits to be made, her position to be assumed, her new rights to be enjoyed. She was eager to display her "newly-wed bonnet and bouquet at the Opera." Custom, in Paris, in the great world of fashion, practically obliged her to wear her diamonds at the Opera within a week of her wedding. There was even a day set aside for the purpose—Friday—and a box reserved for young married couples of rank and position—the first on the side of the Queen's. And above all, she was eager to be presented at Court.

To be presented at Court! A day of days indeed! For a woman it had the importance of a consecration. It gave her her place, settled her in society, in her rank; it raised her from that dubious, that, one might say, almost equivocal

¹ *Le Coucher de la Mariée*, painted by Baudouin, engraved by Moreau.

² In the smart, the ultra-smart world, probably only among princely families, a custom inherited from the courtships of old required the husband to enter his wife's bed only after having shaved his body of every vestige of hair. It is thus that Monsieur le duc d'Orléans, according to the testimony of Monsieur de Valencay, who handed him his shirt, entered the bed of Madame de Montesson.

situation in the eyes of the Court, from that half-life of women who had not been presented, had not been blessed by the light of Versailles, which seemed to lift a woman from limbo. A solemn day! A momentous day! Madame de Genlis has left us its annals. Read and see. Three times Madame de Puisieux has said spells over her head, and still she browbeats the hairdresser, so much art, patience, and labor does this *coiffure* require! At last, Madame de Genlis emerges with a head; now she must have a face; comes the *rouge*, comes powder; then a body; and they make her wear her hoop down to dinner, to digest properly all its secrets. The collar raises an endless debate between Madame de Puisieux and the Maréchale d'Estrées; four times they try it on, four times they remove it, and yet again four times replace it. The Maréchale appeals to her women; gains her point; but the discussion, so gained, rages all through dinner. At last comes the harnessing of the *paniers* and the lower ranges of the dress. Ensues a formal rehearsal of the curtsies, as taught by Gardel: this to a running fire of remarks, advice, and criticism of the kick Madame de Genlis lodges in her train in retiring, a kick they find too *theatrical*. Lastly, on the coach-step, Madame de Puisieux bethinks herself of a daub more of dark *rouge*, fumbles in her patch-box, and addresses Madame de Genlis to Versailles with a great smear of crimson on her faint, faint cheek.

Now picture our young lady, on the morrow, making her first bow to the world. She is alarmed by its numbers, dazzled and dismayed by its novelty, bewildered by all those many eyes, among which she threads her way falteringly, as in a land full of pitfalls. But on she ambles, to and fro, hither, thither, back and forth; ignorant, unsophisticated, true to the fears of her sex and her training, true to the instincts of her nature; modest, reserved, indulgent, amiable with everyone; betraying all the ingenuous impulses of her age, her mind, her heart; helplessly cruising, with an expression of pathetic constraint it takes more than



Photo Giraudon

BAUDOUIN—*Le Coucher de la Mariée*

a day or two to dispel; raising the smiles of the older women by her innocent discomfiture; blinking a shy little eye, the eye of a bird that has not yet learned the airs whistled to it; taking a full fifteen minutes to recover from a curtsy; gurgling little sounds that never quite emerge into meaning; never a notion, no, not the faintest, of what to say or what to feign or what not to say, not even—O sorriest of all simplicities;—not even that first dawning of conjugal love! Now it is that all the voices of the world take her in hand, lead her, catch her, tip her and nudge her. By banter they do it. Hear them:

“How! Six months since the sacrament, and still love your husband! Your milliner, I hear, has a weakness for hers; but you are a Marquise . . .

“Why so forlorn, when your husband is afar? and why so neat, when he is near? Consult the code of modern fashion, my dear, and learn there that a lady dresses for her lover, the world, or herself.

“What a fall were you headed for yesterday! The coach was called to take you to the play, and you sat waiting your husband! A French husband! La, my dear, must you bring your play-acting to the playhouse itself?

“Dear discretion! How long, how long, will you maintain that air of reserve so unbecoming to marriage? A cavalier finds you well-favored and says so; and you blush! Awake! Here a lady blushes but out of her box.

“In very earnest, Madame, your reputation is parlous. Come now! To be round with you. A lobby, to begin with, disreputable. Lackeys for *Monsieur* and *Madame* alike—! Lackeys that are busy about the house, so little they know; footmen that are civil of face for civilians afoot; fellows that pluck you out a silver watch to tell the time o’ day by; lackeys with not a leg between them and a full three inches below the proper height!

“And yourself, Madame! You are known to rise at eight by the clock; if you were leaving the ball then, you

would keep better hours. And what were you up to? Consulting with your cook and steward!

"At last, for a wonder, you remember your *toilette!* But how little as yet you appreciate its importance, its duties, its decorum! You are eighteen, Lord love you, and not a man on the premises; nothing but a brace o' women, and the hussies will never see scolding in your service. The first bonnet they hand you is ever the one you will have. Order a gown, and, as I'm a body, you take it!

"Dinner rings; and the bell is still pealing, when down you come. Had you never a ribbon to place yet? And judge of our surprise! The steward announces dinner to *Monsieur* . . .

"You thought it handsome, I warrant, after dinner, to entertain the conversation. Remember, this is Paris. But 'twas all naught, and for very vapors we must soon be gaming. I spied you yawning, and the game was *comets*, too, the sport of the Court! Touching that, I recall we had played it four days, when you must be asking what it was. A city woman from the Marais put the same question on the same day . . .

"Between games, we looked over our sewing-bags. And what fell from yours? Cuffs! Cuffs! Cuffs! And cuffs for your husband! Ah, my child, is it all in vain then that the talent of France devised wrist-bands to distinguish gentle hands from the common pulse?

"You take your seat; and never a murmur, never a sigh for the sight you are, never a puff in the mirror for the freak you are to-day!

"You go to the Tuileries on Opera days and to the Palais-Royal on others. Nay, you do worse: you go there in the morning. One would think you walk for your health. And when you appear there on the proper day, and at a decent hour, how, how are you habited? Your lace could not have cost over fifty crowns. . . .

"What were you doing, Sunday last, in your parish, at ten in the morning? And dressed too! Not even a *cow!*

Who would believe it? At ten o' the clock? And in your own parish? My dear! My dear! A proper place for a lady to hear Mass! And is it no slander, as I hear, that you *vesper*? What! Vespers too? I have it from the Marquis de ——, who swears your salvation will be your undoing. Now, a sermon or two we may grant you, but none of your converting kind; a nice woman is made for nice doctrines; and those you may tell at your church door by the press of coaches and the price of seats. 'Tis a mean thing to be edified for twopence . . ."

And so on, and so on: a running fire of raillery on every point, in which the novice falls short.

What! Not wit enough to quake at a mouse, a spider, a fly! Not wit enough to ail, when ail you do, or even when you do not! Not wit enough to wear on your back; for, though the gown be choice enough, yet it was not trimmed by *Duchapt*! A hoop too short by a foot—whom do you deal with? Diamonds fine in the water, but not set by Lempereur. And as for the charms of conversation—ah, meager indeed! Young lady, you wag a green tongue, a green tongue. And the charms of fancy, of caprice—a pauper! She orders her horses for six, at six she drives; proposes a game and plays it; welcomes one day and welcomes the next! In a word, she is ever the same, consistent, constant; all *of a piece*,¹ unspeakably *of a piece*—a term which is final and which, in that day, damns without appeal.

In this facetious diatribe leveled at our young lady we see, under the gibe, the code of custom of the period, the secret constitution of its manners, the ideal of its social usages.

For indeed, indeed, in a world so exquisitely factitious; amid such pleasant pretense as everywhere reigns there; given these painted firmaments that vault the *salons*; these silken walls of celestial and blooming hues reborn in a thousand mirrors; these seats where love-pools are lacquered; these inlaid floors; this museum of curios, rarities, fantasies,

¹ *Bagatelles morales*. London, 1755. *Lettre à une dame anglaise*.

gems, and toys that stud the apartments; and even in the country, where the gardens are all aisled bowers, vales, groves, terraces and steps, woman would soon ruin the harmony of her environment, if she did not divest herself of all naturalness and spontaneity. The age is one of universal remoulding; it bewitches whatever it touches, transforms it into a mannered charm, alters the earth itself, shapes it over to its taste, and inculcates, not only in his environment, but in man himself, in his very thoughts, the conventions of art. In this world woman is the final model of convention; she is the own child of art. She must conform to all the compacts of that artificial age, she must master all its studied graces, all those "wayward airs of proven charm, inculcated by the vanity of the parents, furthered by the example and commerce of other women, and perfected by personal study."¹ The airs of fashion are required by the world in every detail of her person, her costume, her carriage, her gestures. Even in trifles she must show that distinction of manner which is the envy of the *bourgeoisie* and their never attained, though ever aped, model. She is schooled in a charming play of body, a whole little comedy of nods and smiles, a dainty rigmarole of listless vapors, a studied preen of pride, a weather eye and the right cardinal point of a lip compressed, simperings and dimplings and a puckering pout, and that fine art of the fan on which Carracioli has written well-nigh a treatise: fan, my fan, fan of the fair, so prettily pert, as it plays over finger and cheek, snapping out temper with a quick *cli-li*, or whispering well-a-day with its long swish to and fro like a pigeon's wing. And satisfaction too, which you may know by this sign: a tiny tap laid on with a *Prithee, have done*, which may mean any number of mischievous things. And how many other tricks to acquire; to wit, to preen, to patch, to gem, to take the floor, to greet, to eat, to drink with fluttering lashes, and to blow that bit of a— in a manner of speaking—nose.

¹Marivaux. Complete Works. 1781. Vol. IX. *Detached Comments.*

Everything—beauty, bearing, intonation, elegance, expression, carriage, poses—everything; from the world she must learn it. She must consult it for her very words, her vocabulary, the new idiom which lends life and polish to the least of her reflections. The Age is so accustomed to adorning, heightening and enlivening all things, so quick to nurse the merest gesture into a thing of charm, the faintest smile into a glamorous quaver, that it looks to every syllable that falls from her lips for a distilled essence, a sensation subtle, ethereal, divine. *Divine! Amazing! Miraculous!* are the small coin of conversation. An exuberant and exclamatory speech, windy with hyperbole, invades the French tongue and turns its sobriety to inflation. Everywhere you hear of *numberless graces, untold perfections*. At the least fatigue, you are *quite gone*; at the slightest annoyance, *in despair* or *prodigiously affected*. There is no such thing as wanting something: you must be *pinning* for it. If you dislike someone, he can only be a fellow “to fling o’er the roof.” Or you are feeling a little low? No such thing: you are *sickeningly stupid*. You applaud *splittingly*; you praise *breathlessly*; you love *miraculously*. And even this style of perfervid expressions is not enough: an *accomplished* lady must learn to lisp, warble, and croon, pipe a refined treble, and pronounce, instead of *pigeons* and *angels*, *pizeons* and *anzels*.

But it is more than a woman’s physical being that is thus remodeled into a conventional type; an even greater revolution is undermining her moral nature. The world is teaching her to rebuild her mind and transform her heart. All her native instincts, her need of faith, expression, and support through some creed, some service, some way of life like that of which she had formed the habit in the convent, she must now outgrow as the infirmities of an infant spirit. She dismisses all serious ideas, to rise to the plane of a new point of view, from which the world surveys life so loftily that it sees in it nothing but two alternatives, pleasure and *ennui*. Repudiating resolutely what were termed “the

phantoms of decency and decorum," forswearing all faiths, all those principles of which in other days her sex had had the care, the practice, and the saddening burdens, woman now mounts to the inspiration of a new doctrine; and she is not long in demonstrating the facility of that worldly wisdom, which sees in human life, freed of all onerous obligations, only one great right and providential aim, the right to enjoy oneself; which sees in woman, delivered from the bondage of matrimony and domestic habits, a being whose sole duty to society is to personify its pleasures and to offer them to all who seek.

The husband to whom her family so coolly made over the young girl was not always of a repulsive type, stout banker or aged squire, as custom requires and our fancies not unwillingly submit. More often than not, he was some charming young spark, some dapper soul sleek with manner and polish, without character or coherence; giddy, flighty, inflated, as it were, with the light air of the hour, a frivolous weathercock wheeling briskly in a breeze of license. This young man, man since he was, could hardly deny, in those first hours, a welcome relief, as he folded his spurs and led home a wife still swathed in her virginal veils; for he owed her the revelation of a new felicity in marriage, the unsuspected thrill of decent pleasures, fresh, unfamiliar, and delightful. Meanwhile feelings long-hushed were stirring and budding in the young wife. She was troubled and touched by a wonder, shall we say, come true? She was living her dream of a life all of love, such as the convent had taught her. And on his side the husband, flattered by the bubbles this little brain blew, the object of a wonder that ever more heady grew and grew, condoned an artless enthusiasm, which amused him; and encouraged, ever so indulgently, her doting. But when all the pleasures of those first weeks of marriage were over, the visits, the little trips, the introductions, the planning of now and hereafter, when the house settled down and the husband, alone with his wife, found himself face to face

with a kind of passion, the wonder, it would often befall, proved only too true! He had not foreseen how far or how fast she would go; and enough was enough. Like all the men of his day, he cared above all for the "light and agreeable side of things." What was he to do with a passion in the house? It upset everything. It suited neither his nature nor his tastes. Love, in fact, was not for people born and bred as he had been. And then, what constraint, what disquiet, must inevitably ensue; what an encroachment on his liberty, his pleasures, in this jealous, restless, overwrought passion; what a long jaunt would life be, jolted by questions, spying, strictures, hourly inquisitions, brows of thunder, floods, storms and tirades! A ruffling discovery it was for him to make at the end of a few months of marriage, solicited as he had been at the turn of the first by the bachelor life he had buried at supper with the town trulls, by his memories, by the vices of his youth: this monotony of bliss unrelieved by a smattering of bawdry!

A little shamefacedly—and nettled for being so—he sought nevertheless to treat his little wife and her great love with civility, and to her sighs replied with coaxing irony and compassionate indifference, assuming the tone one takes with children to make them realize that they are acting unreasonably. Then discretion turned to valor, and he saw less and less of her; his absences from the conjugal roof became every day more conspicuous. His wife now, at night, at four in the morning, would lie tossing and exhausted, hearing his coach at the door; but his step in the hall paused no longer at her door; he would go on to a little room overhead, which assured him the freedom of his nights and of those homecomings, as now, at dawn, on the peal of the Angelus. In the morning she waited. At last, about eleven, Monsieur sent down to inquire ceremoniously if he might be admitted. Tears, temper, reproaches—he met the flood with the banter of cool self-possession, the perfect ease of good company. Sometimes, after such scenes, the wife would turn to her grandparents. To her

dismay, they treated her great heartache as rubbish and merely commiserated the pettiness of her mind. In her mother's expression, as in her words, she seemed to read that there was something indecent in loving a husband after this fashion. And, to dry her tears, came the sunburst of her brother-in-law's bland smile: "Come now! Assuming the worst: he may have a mistress. What of it? Will he love you any the less?" At that, the heavens fall: an outcry, an agony of jealousy! The husband then enters and, with the accent of a genuinely concerned friend, slips these words to his wife: "A little sport, my dear: you need it. Go abroad, find yourself a friend, live like the women of your years." And tenderly he concludes: "That is the only way to my heart, my dear."

CHAPTER II

SOCIETY—THE SALONS

THREE PERIODS MAY be discerned in the social life of the eighteenth century. Three phases of its history mark its spirit with three distinct manners. The beginning of the reign of Louis XV, the end of his reign, and the reign of Louis XVI, bring to the world they transform and renew the successive changes of three epochs. And it is the features of these three periods which we must now study. But where are they to be seen? In books? No. What book will give us the graphic touch, the elusive color, the indefinable impression of a living world? What *Mémoire* will offer its pulse, its expression, its flesh-and-blood features? No. By-and-bye we shall turn to them for whatever portraits and reminiscences, whatever dim echoes and fugitive images may now, after these many years, be gleaned from a meeting of men and women. But really to know the society of the eighteenth century, to feel it with the life of our eyes, let us open a folio of engravings and watch it live, on three stages, in a *salon* of 1730, a *salon* of 1760, and a *salon* of 1780.

Here, in the first one,¹ society is still an intimate gathering. It is a homelike function, a pleasure which partakes of the happy peace and musing reminiscence of the morrow of a ball. The room is lofty and spacious; the walls are hung with pictures of bathing nudes; the eye roams over panels of silk, embossed with flowers, over massive chairs with molded arms and feet, to a fireplace, where a light fire is flaming, and to the mantel with a mirror surmounted by sirens and resting on a marble lion. The scene is like a

¹ *L'Hiver*, by Nicolas Lancret, engraved by J. P. Le Bas.

pause in a party out of the Decameron. Look at its women; they tell the tale: these who are warming their feet by the fire and their hands on a lapdog; those who are skimming an album of music with flying fingers and listless eyes; these who are playing, indolently, a game of *hombre*, with vagrant smiles; and the young thing turning in her chair to tease the cat with a spool of yarn: is it not an idyll by Watteau, for what were his idylls but the ideal of a French *salon*?—the same peace, the same amenity, the same mannered charm, the same welcoming smile for the moment? At this time the nobility is barely Court-broken; and in this snug *salon* and these winter pastimes there is more than a hint of the life of the manor. Yet the life of the eighteenth century is already well under way: here is the caprice of its costumes, here are its women in inviting *négligés*, their white gowns embossed with flowers, their furs, their feathers, their *toques*. Over their books flutters a wit one would vow fled from Boccaccio to alight on the lips of Marivaux. And here and there—where that man is standing, swathed in a mantle, a domino—near a chair, on the muffling Oriental carpet, someone has dropped a velvet gaming purse, or a mask hangs and yawns, the mask of the Regency, black of cheek, white of mouth, Harlequin's mask—the mask of the Ball, the mask of Folly, filched from a night in Venice for a night in old Paris.

The second *salon* is brilliant, noisy. Brocade is looped over the doors. Cherubs are frolicking up the arch. Medallions of women smile from the mirror-heads. From the molded ceiling hang lustres of tinkling Bohemian glass shimmering with tapers. The plate is by Germain, pyramids of fruit tower on the sideboard. It is the high tide of pleasure—the Ball. Tambourine, flute, violin and bass-viol pour their wedded strains from a platform. Slippers of satin thread the tessellated floor inlaid in lozenges; necklaces dance on white throats; nosegays are nodding on the gowns; watches swing at the waist; diamonds sparkle in the hair. In the center the dance wreathes its couples, twining their

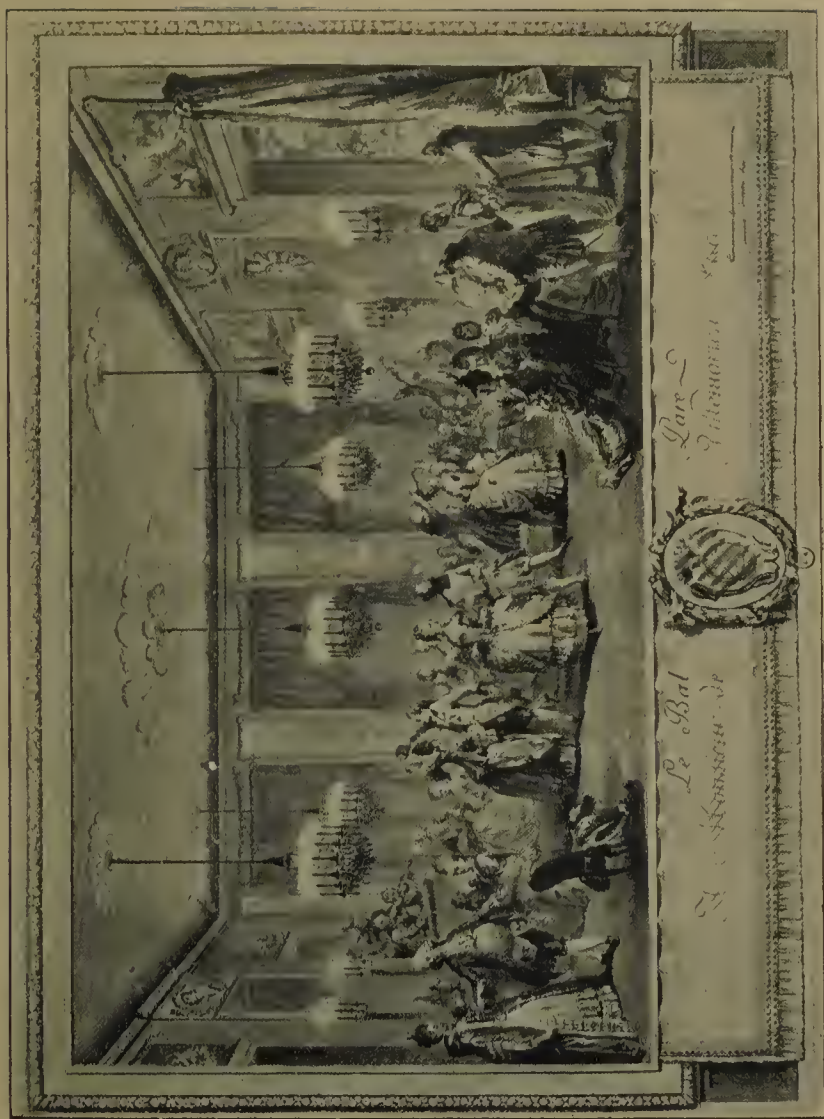


Photo Giraudon

SAINT-AUBIN—Le Bal paré

ungloved hands; slim cavaliers wheel their light partners; and laces are crushed by those fur cuffs, which Lauzun nipped for a favor from the mantles of princesses all too Polish. The chatter bubbles, simmers. Ladies fan themselves, whisper. Blue sashes, the Knights of the Order, lean over the chairs, paying court to the young married women. By the fire, another generation nurse their memories; old ladies warm their soles and roll oranges into the hands of cruising children. Thrilling pleasures! Heady, exquisite hours! The painter who has left us this delightful scene would seem to have caught in a few inches of paper all the youth, love and tripping measures of his time, its stately elegance, the fine flower of its most choice aristocracy, in full bloom, in its triumphant meridian! ¹

Between this *salon* under Louis XV and that under Louis XVI there is all the difference between the two reigns. The *salon* Louis XV seems to open its doors on the present, that of Louis XVI on the future. Its walls, its architecture, grow overcast, like the Court and the society of that time, with reform, earnestness, responsibility. True, the cupids still swarm on the ceiling, but they cling there, forgotten, like little sprites of the past; and now the pilasters rear their strict profiles beside the chaste curves of the mirrors. And in the great room, its silence broken only by two dogs, there is no longer any dancing, no longer any effervescence. You see no more couples—merely little groups meeting here and there: at a gaming-table two women playing with one man and turning, with upraised cards, to consult the bystanders; at a table of *trictrac*, a lady with an ear-trumpet holding forth to an abbé. By the fire, a woman is chatting. By the window, a girl is reading.² Society it may be, but convivial it is not. Already, in this *salon*, we find the atmosphere of 1788 and 1789: conversation has become dissertation, gaming is merely so much time won from boredom,

¹ *Le Bal paré*, drawn by A. de Saint-Aubin, engraved by Duclos.

² *L'Assemblée au salon*, painted by Lavreince, engraved by Dequavillers (see page 62).

and reading mesmerizes women. This world is waiting, preparing, listening: if it laughs, it laughs at Turgot. As I look at this *salon* as seen by Lavreince, I note in its games, its books, its isolated groups, its coldness and phlegm, a world in decline, overcast, a *salon*, say, of Chanteloup, but with Madame Necker in the place of Madame de Choiseul.

The two leading *salons* of Paris in the eighteenth century were two courts in little: the Palais-Royal and the Temple.

The Palais-Royal was open to any woman who had been presented at Court: she was welcome, without invitation, on Opera nights for supper. On those nights all the fine world of Paris swam through its doors. On the *petits jours*, however, a more intimate set met there. It numbered some twenty adepts, who held a standing invitation and came when they liked; and in the evening, sauntering from one end of the *salon* to the other, they paraded the gayety, the vivacity of their very smart talk indeed. At these delightful, informal evenings, the women you met were Madame de Beauvau, Madame de Boufflers, Mesdames de Ségur, senior and junior, the Baronne de Talleyrand, with her sweet, old-fashioned face, and the Marquise de Fleury. The place of honor fell to a lady-of-honor of the Duchesse de Chartres, Madame de Blot, who owed it to the infatuation of the Duc d'Orléans, a passion her triumphant resistance had converted to a tender and respectful friendship. Claiming: fine features, a fair skin, a tapering shape, brilliant teeth (but why so long, eh?) hair of a rarely soothing shade, a remarkable art of dress; all manner of graces indeed, of a nature to outlive the first bloom of youth and revive its waning airs, Madame de Blot enjoyed universal homage and a mellow teething. Virtuous in a court which had many affectations but not that, she retrieved her good name by her gayety, her principles by her charm. Her laces were never too strait for a breeze and a smile to blow through: till, one day, alas, she met with an accident. She read *Clarissa*

Harlowe. She was never the same again. She had migrated. She had miscarried. She let down her skirts and lengthened her lashes. She lurked, she languished; developed a sentimental itch, a long rash of effusiveness, the most perfidious and nail-biting prudery. The ailment, unforseen, was deep-seated. She crusaded; and presently she was wearing a miniature façade of the church, where her brother was buried. She cultivated the talents of the heart, and walked, at witching hours, from *salon* to *salon*, a bell-ringer.

To offset Madame de Blot, however, there was the Vicomtesse de Clermont-Gallerande, a lady who took all her thoughts at a hurdle, catered in curvets and cracks, tickled and truckled and set the table roaring not by any wit of her own but by what she could pick up and ride away with on her quaint fun, her quicksilver moods, the vivacity of her impressions, the quick welling and felicitous trick of her phrases. And then there was that woman of real talent, the fairy-lady of Learning, Madame de Genlis.

These ladies reigned not alone; there were others; less youthful for the most part; ladies who had been attached to the service of the late Duchess: Madame de Barbantane, for one. From her faded charms, her dearest foe deposes, she had salvaged only a red nose, a common air, and a reputation, on some far-flung traveler's tale, for homekeeping wit, which her good sense kept muzzled. Madame la Comtesse de Rochambeau was another, a pretty old keepsake, who lost years with every smile and fanned a memory breezy with light stories. And the rear-guard was the old Comtesse de Montaubon, who pleased as she could with the wonder of her appetite, her addle-headedness, and her passion for gaming. But one woman above all was the pride and the pet of the Palais-Royal; and that was the Marquise de Polignac, who owed to her homeliness, her old ape-inap, the tartness of her tongue and the curtness of her manners and jests, a name for eccentricity,

which she was at some pains to justify. Very popular for the sport she afforded, flattered and humored for her wit, which was not unfeared, though it was more mischievous than malicious, she had broken the *salons* to her scoldings, of which she was the first to make light, and to her senile love for the Comte de Maillebois, which she avowed valiantly and pooh-poohed loudly. Her friends drew in their heels and put up with her, with her crotchets, her atrabiliar mercies, a temper so singularly in contrast to the even, monotonous politeness of the time, with that popular mold, that vernacular vigor, in which she cast her thoughts and which prompted her reply to a lady who had been praising Madame de Lutzelbourg loudly as the most active woman of sixty-eight summers in France: "True, you say true, as active as fleas can make her."

In this *salon*, Madame de Fleury, who shared with the Baronne de Talleyrand the friendship of Chartres' Duchess, shone like a young Folly, with her fetching face, stunning eyes, and her nose for fooling, for breath-taking pranks and will-o'-the-wisp whims, which led her one day at Madame de Guéménée's after the departure of the Court, to drop her hoop and whip up the evening in a bodice, a tippet and a little dimity petticoat, over which her two pockets hung flapping, twin challenging targets. An irrepressible madcap—Walpole said of her, "D'ye think it could be domesticated?"—she had every gift but that of sense, a verbal wit that tripped everything and a wit of ideas that paled at nothing. After the fall of Turgot, when d'Alembert was enlarging on the great clearing that minister had made in the thickets of privilege, she flung at the philosopher and his impressive phrase with "That is why he has left us so many *fardeles*." On another occasion, maintaining against Madame de Laval the rights of the nobility attacked by Turgot, she championed French aristocracy with a truly Castilian pride. "You amaze me. For all the respect I owe the King, I never thought to owe him what I am. The nobles, I know, have many times made the King; but I defy

you, Madame, though your wit be as good as your birth, to maintain the King ever made us noble.”

In the Museum of Versailles there is a picture by a minor master, now almost forgotten, where we may study in miniature that other great *salon* of the time, the Temple. We are looking into a beautiful bright room with white woodwork and straight lines; the tall windows are draped with pink silk curtains, and through them we catch a glimpse of trees and the sky; portraits of women beam over the doors; in a corner, a blade of gilded wood is ticking the hour; and everywhere, what with these wrought brackets festooning the mirrors, Golconda's in sight: the *salon*, this, of the Prince de Conti, his Gallery of the Four Mirrors. And all these little figures, look, standing, or seated on chairs of such pale-faced tapestry, ambling, idling, roaming, note them well; for each bears a name and the reminder for our eyes of some woman, her shadow, her trailing gown. One is the Princesse de Beauvau, in pale violet, with a black scarf about her throat. Another, in an ample red gown, is the Comtesse d'Egmont senior, a dowager delectable, for all her years, in that little bonnet tilted back on her brow. Look past the Maréchale de Luxembourg in fur and white satin, and see Mademoiselle de Boufflers, rose-clad, her hair hardly powdered, a pale veil on her shoulders, as vaporous as a spring morning. The Maréchale de Mirepoix is in black; a kerchief keeps her head on her shoulders, and a bulging white scarf strays truant to her waist. The lady in fur-lined, sky-blue *pelisse* is Madame de Vierville. The beauty in pink and white bonnet, white *fichu*, a waist of bright rose and a skirt no less summery, with an apron spilling a flounce of *tulle* that cools the warm note in a pale ardor of dew, is the Comtesse de Boufflers, playing maid over a dish and a warming-pan. Note, too, by the round table, a certain cerise and white skirt with conjugal stripes: Mademoiselle Bagarotti, whose debts the Prince de Conti pays, or will pay. But among many one above all beckons; cynosure let her be, this little whiff of a woman passing, in

the foreground, with a napkin and a plate. Tiny hat and tilted brim; ribbons of lavender swooning on throat, waist, arms, and hat; white veil; dress of demurest gray and her apron idle; she might pass for a shepherdess on her way from the Opera to the Petit Trianon; but here she is the Comtesse d'Égmont junior, *née* Richelieu. Here and there, among the ladies, seated or leaning on a chair, we see the Bailly de Chabillant, the Mathematician d'Ortous de Mairon, the Comtes de Jarnac and de Charbot, President Hénault, his black suit outlined against a flowered screen of pink silk, Pont de Veyle, the Prince d'Hénin, the Chevalier de la Laurency, and the Prince de Beauvau, reading a pamphlet. The master of the house himself, so well known for his aversion to being painted, is none the less here represented; as a great favor, to complete the picture, he has allowed the painter to limn his wig and flatter his back, as he stands chatting with Trudaine. Near him stands an open clavichord, and at it a little lad sits playing: and that little lad is Mozart. Beside the boy, Jelyotte is strumming a guitar and singing.—Freedom, mirth, informal intimacy; music, dogs, no servants; such are the habits of these intimate parties at the Prince de Conti's, whose English teas are neatly served by aproned beauties performing with platters and kettles and cake, and whose suppers also dispense with liveries, thanks to the *handmaids* placed within the guests' reach at every corner of the table.

The soul of this set was the Prince's mistress, the Comtesse de Boufflers. They had met long ago at his sister's, the Duchess d'Orléans, whose lady-of-honor she was. Years had strengthened their union, and time adding to habit what habit had to love, the relations of the Prince and his Countess had become, in fact no less than in profession, a kind of contract, in which constancy condoned scandal and happiness was itself a kind of decorum.

This woman, who was a good half of the Prince's life, to whom he devoted all his hours apart from the chase, this queen of l'Ile-Adam and *Idol* of the Temple, Madame



OLIVIER—*La Cour du Prince de Conti et Mozart*

de Boufflers, was accounted the kindest woman in the world. She had wit, a great deal of wit, and a wit all her own, novel, keen, often falling out with sense through an innate abhorrence of the commonplace, but always pungent and telling, ringing in contradiction with the accent of a rebel soul and an emancipated nature. Her talk was most charming and brilliant when it turned on an unreasonable topic: paradox then whetted her tongue and tipped it with fire, perversity, a startling ingenuity, all the happy audacity of lost causes. Merry with the mirth she kindled, delighted to amuse, amiable and self-possessed, a good listener, she met the wit of others with a smile so fetching and so well-timed, that it was everywhere sought as a graceful award and held a court of young men and women at the feet of a woman who, at forty, still bore the bloom of twenty.

The charm which the Comtesse de Boufflers brought to this *salon* was matched by her daughter-in-law's, the young and pretty Comtesse Amélie de Boufflers. In her there breathed such sweetness, candor, youth and spontaneity, that she might have sat for that portrait of a lady described in the mincing parlance of the time as "the model of all minikin graces and nursling strides, of all the arch little things for which we prize woman as a gem." This archness, however, knew no little guile: in her innocence the Comtesse Amélie showed a keen claw, a piercing logic, an intellect primed with disconcerting retorts. Often she would cross her mother-in-law cruelly; but how quickly she atoned, how promptly she brought balm by a phrase delightful and startling, sensitive and profound, which leapt from her wit and seemed to spring from her heart! "For the life of me, I can never remember he is not your son-in-law"—this to his mother one day, when that lady deplored the way in which she referred to the young Comte de Boufflers. On another occasion, to appease her and slip willy-nilly into her heart, she coined a phrase, an effusion all but sublime. She had been playing a game much in vogue for a time, a game called *Boats*, in the course of which supposing you

to be foundering with the two people you love, or should love, most in the world you are asked, with unfeeling impertinence, which you would save. The boat was sinking with her mother-in-law and her mother; the latter she knew little, as she had not been brought up by her. "I would save," she cried, "my mother, and sink with my mother-in-law!"—She was a woman of talent, too. Her voice was charming, and her harp was one of the delights of the little concerts presided over by the Prince de Conti.

To the men and women represented by Olivier in the picture at Versailles add the Duchesse de Lauzun, the Princesse de Pons, Madame d'Hunolstein, the Comtesse de Vauban, the Vicomte de Ségur, the Prince de Pons, the Duc de Guines and the Archbishop of Toulouse, and we shall have the names of those who formed the inner set of the Prince de Conti's *salon*. They are the heart of this little group, the daily visitors, the friends of the family, who adorn the two tables of that large bay room depicted in another of Olivier's pictures,¹ in which the Renaissance decoration glows dimly on a background of gold and the cloth slips over the keys of the humming clavichord.

But the Temple had its days of reception, too. To its Monday suppers came all the men and women of the Court. A throng of a hundred and fifty people then filled its *salons*: mob-nights these were. One evening the crush was so great that the Marquise de Coaslin was turning back, and as the Prince chaffed her on her professed dismay, "Judge, my lord," she exclaimed, "I was so bewildered, I dropped a curtsey to M."—naming one of her enemies.

In another princely family, which devoted its most magnificent receptions to Chantilly, in the hôtel Condé, two great balls were given in the winter of 1749; one a *bal paré*, from which the women of the financial world were banned, lest they detract, says a gazeteer of the time, from the "beauties of the blade" (*beautés d'épée*); the other a masked ball, to which were invited a dozen *received wenches*

¹ *Le Souper du Prince de Conti*, in the Museum of Versailles (see page 110).

to enliven the evening and heighten by contrast the ducal virtues.

Turning now to the beginning of the century, if we name the Regent's suppers at the Palais-Royal, the evenings of the Duchesse de Maine, the revels at l'Île-Adam, Chantilly and Berny, the latter eclipsed by those the age was later to see there, we shall have exhausted the echoes of festivity and the movements of society. In the few documents that survive from this period, we find hardly a name, now and again, of some house where society meets, where congenial spirits mate, the memory of some center of conversation and association, some family of kindred wits and characters. Festivities and functions, formal dinners, formal suppers, lavish hospitality and receptions extending beyond an intimate set are the exclusive province apparently of the Court and of princely houses. When we do find them in Paris, it is only in some *salon* without a past, without taste or background, in the homes of a few financiers or some newly-rich *mississippiennes* risen from calico to cloth of gold, from amber beads to strings of pearls. At the pomp of this world, which wallows in its wealth and makes an orgy of its luxury, a great lament rises in the Regency, a great lament on the part of women of refinement for those houses which are no more, where once it had been possible to converse and reflect; wistfully they recall the hôtel de Rambouillet and those evenings from which one rose, as from the banquet of Plato, with soul nourished and fortified.

What the eighteenth century knows as *the world* does not exist yet in French society. The Versailles of Louis XIV still dominates everything; and it is not until the middle of his reign that social life breaks away from this focus and, falling back on itself, flows into Paris, branches and spreads, throbs and flowers in a thousand drawing-rooms. Only then do we see in its full splendor and style,

at the apogee of its power and charm, teeming and full-blown, that great influence of the day, which was to end by annihilating Versailles—the *salon*.

The famous fair of the Regency, even the most brilliant and courted, Madame de Prie, Madame de Parabère, Madame de Sabran, leave behind them no tradition of a *salon*. They go to their graves without that immortality which even the least of women are soon to find in the creation of a set, the cultivation of a few names around their own, the association of their memory with that of their friends and guests.—In these first hours of the century, when the manners of the period were emerging crudely, what *salons* do we find? There is the miserable house of the old Marquise d'Alluys, a house of affairs, of all sorts of affairs, where the game set of Paris, the sparks, lovers and irregulars came for a noonday meal of blood-sausage and force-meat pies, chestnuts sauced with muscatel and seasoned with all the scandal of the hour. There are some other shabby houses ruined by the currency, cramped, on the verge of starvation, like that of the Princesse de Léon, where the morning was devoted to wheedling from the traders, diplomatically, the evening meal. This was no exceptional or exaggerated case; at the Maréchale d'Estrée's, one evening, at a light supper, the meal failed to make its appearance, because the butter-woman refused credit.

If we except two or three *bureaux d'esprit*, we find in the books, *mémoires* and anecdotes of the first half of the century no other *salons* worthy of that name except the hôtel de Sully, where Voltaire dwells on Madame de Flamarens and her touching beauty and Madame de Gontaut and her pert beauty; the hôtel de Duras, which combined the charms of the mind with those of the table and the dance; and the hôtel de Villars, frequented until the Maréchale's death in 1763 by all the members of the best society, a splendid *salon*, to which Madame de Villars brought the charm of her fine face and that manner which only the Court could

bestow and which the age conceded to none who had not lived there. Nor must we forget the suppers given by Madame de Chauvelin, where the seven women seated at her table on a night in 1733 were represented in a skit that swept the town under the aspect of the Seven Deadly Sins: Madame la Vidame de Montfleury representing *Pride*; Madame la Marquise de Surgères, *Avarice*; Madame de Montboissier, *Wantonness*; Madame la Duchesse d'Aiguillon, *Envy*; Madame de Courteille, *Choler*; and Madame Pinceau de Luce, *Indolence*.

In the final months of the year 1750 Paris saw the founding of a *salon* destined, throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, to be the leading one in Paris—that of the elder Madame de Boufflers, then newly created Maréchale de Luxembourg. No pains were spared by its responsible head to make it an intellectual resort. Jealous of the influence and renown of the *hôtel Duras* and the charm lent it by Pont de Veyle, she persuaded her bosom friend, the Duchesse de la Vallière, to drop Jelyotte and take up the Comte de Bissy; and the latter, whom she foisted on the Academy through Madame de Pompadour, became that all-essential fixture, that article of incorporation, the literary light of the house. The real light of this *salon*, however, was not Bissy at all, but the Maréchale herself, the Maréchale with her brisk manner, at once jaunty and imposing, her epigrams, the originality of her judgments, her authority on conduct, and the talent of her taste. She threw open her house to pleasure, earnestness, novelty, letters: la Harpe read his *Barmecides* here, and Gentil Bernard recited his *Art of Love* from the manuscript. And to all these attractions was added yet another, the most potent of all, no doubt, that of independent criticism, so outspoken indeed in its treatment of the reigning ministers and even of the royal family, that for a time Madame de Luxembourg was forbidden to appear at Court.

There, in a woman's salon, under her shaping hand, was formed and perfected the polished France of the eighteenth

century, a France so proud of itself, of so accomplished a grace, of an elegance so privileged—a social order destined to dominate Europe till the days of 1789 as the dictator of taste for all its States, the school of manners of all its nations, the model, as it were, of human society. There was laid the foundation of that great institution of the time, the only one which maintained, above the discredit of every moral law, the force of a discipline; there was laid the foundation of what was called good company—a sort of association of the sexes, formed for the purpose of distinguishing itself from bad company, from vulgar or provincial society, by the perfection of its charm and conviviality, the urbanity of its usages, by an art of tact, indulgence and worldly wisdom, by, in a word, all the refinements and discoveries of that social spirit, which a writer of the time compares to and identifies with the spirit of charity. Customs and usages, formalities, personal etiquette, all were decreed by good company; it set the tone of conversation; it taught how to praise without emphasis or affectation, how to reply to praise without disdaining or affecting it, how to appreciate others without seeming to patronize them; it mastered, and made those whom it numbered master, innumerable refinements of speech, thought, and even of feeling, thanks to which a discussion could never turn to a dispute or slander degenerate into malice; so lightly did it touch all things, dwelling on them never longer than wit itself would. If it failed to impart modesty, reserve, kindness, indulgence, tender or lofty sentiments, or self-forgetfulness, it at least required their acknowledgment, exacted their semblance, entertained their memory, and recalled their claims. For good company in the eighteenth century was more than the mentor of civilized living; it not merely upheld such standards as derive from taste; it exercised a moral influence as well, by promoting virtues of custom and conduct, by entertaining a spirit of self-respect, by preserving a sense of honor. In its highest principle, what, in effect, did it stand for? The cult of honor, the last and

most disinterested cult of an aristocracy. Whatever pertains to honor it passes upon; whatever falls short of honor, servility, rancor, degrading instincts or vices, it flays with the rigor and power of public opinion. If this caste once ostracize a man, if its sentence go forth—"No one receives him"—his is a life lost.

Madame la Maréchale de Luxembourg gave two great suppers a week. After hers came those of Madame de la Vallière, whose divine beauty, the first time she appeared at Court, led the Duc de Gesvres to exclaim, "Now we have a Queen!" Madame de la Vallière was not blessed with wit, not, at least, with such as breeds mirth, but she was agreeable by nature, by disposition. Indolent in her passions, indifferent in love, rarely consulting her heart in the choice of her lovers, she owed to her passive virtues, her somewhat cool social skill, her tranquil temperament, the softness of her affections, the mildness of her antipathies, a certain subdued charm, which combined with her great and impressive manner as a hostess to fill her *salon* throughout the whole period with a very choice world. Then came the suppers of Madame de Forcalquier, *La Bellissima*, "a good, dull soul, involved and obscure," who on one occasion at least gave proof, for all her reputation, of a wit as ready as her hand. That was the day when, failing to obtain a separation for a blow her husband had given her, prudently, in strict intimacy, she sought out her bully and snapped, as she returned it: "There, sir, take back your blow. I have no use for it." The set which gathered about Madame de Forcalquier was known as the hothouse of the *Cabinet Vert*; and it was in this greenhouse that Gresset found the inspiration for his comedy of *Le Méchant*.

Or you might sup in the society of a few men of letters at the Princesse de Talmont's, the former mistress of the Pretender, quite the maddest and most original of women, one who was sure to initial any occasion with the mark of her eccentricities of word, manner, costume or menu. Or at the Comtesse de Broglie's, who was likened to a tempest

and whose vigor, vivacity and sallies would have quickened, says Madame du Deffand, twelve good men and true as she. Or at Madame de Crussol's. Or at Madame de Cambis'. At Madame de Bussy's too. Or at Madame de Caraman's, the elder sister of the Prince de Chimay. Or, best of all, with the woman who spoke of supper, as her age did, as "one of the four ends of Man," with, of course, Madame du Deffand.

There were choice suppers served by the President Hénault, prepared by the famous Lagrange, the honors of which were done by the not altogether disinterested affability of Madame de Jonsac and the cordial but slightly common affability of Madame d'Aubeterre, the President's niece. And there was an excellent spread at the Marquise de Livry's, a lady ineffably lively, young, and natural, who would speed, from one end of the *salon* to the other, in the heat of a discussion, her slipper at the head of an opponent—a veritable Cinderella's slipper.

For one whole winter, the winter of 1767, Paris spoke of nothing but one entertainment, the famous Chinese ball at which eight score dancers of either sex appeared in costumes of the Celestial Empire, divided into groups of four men and four women, the first of which was led by the Duc de Chartres and the Comtesse d'Egmont. This ball, at which the prize for beauty went to Madame de Saint-Mégrin, had been offered to Madame d'Henin by the Duchesse de Mirepoix. No woman was more loved or more lovable than this amusing Madame de Mirepoix, ever extravagant, perpetually out of pocket, perishing with privations and ruined with gaming, for all her hundred thousand pounds a year;¹ yet, when she fled from Versailles and

¹ Of Madame de Mirepoix Walpole has traced a portrait of unsparing truth. "She has read widely, though she shows it rarely, and her taste is perfect. Her manners are cold but thoroughly polite. She even succeeds in concealing the pride she takes in her Lorraine blood, though she never forgets it. No one in France has a better acquaintance with the world of quality, as no one is on better terms with the King. She is false, crafty and ingratiating beyond measure, when her interest requires, but also indolent and faint-hearted. She has never known other passion than gaming; and

turned into Paris, always gay and unruffled, sweet and obliging, gracious and eager to please, ever solicitous of services to render, so kind indeed that her cringing at Court was forgotten and she was sure of a welcome, if not esteem, wherever she went. Madame de Mirepoix not only entertained the Court with balls; she gave suppers, to which Madame du Deffand conceded a gayety of spirit and sparkle of talk she missed at her own. For a time these suppers were held every Sunday; and the table was not long enough to hold all the nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives and intimates of a favorite, who may be said to have made accommodation her mission and her credit everyone's but her own.

One *salon* rivalled that of Madame de Luxembourg: the Maréchale de Beauvau's. Like the other Maréchale, she was an accomplished pontiff of taste and style, an index and model of the usages of the world. But a temper less peremptory, less brusque, manners, no doubt, of a finer cast, gave her a distinction all her own and made her one of the women, who contributed most to the reputation which Paris enjoyed among the well-born of all nations as the capital of Europe. Hers was a feeling courtesy, never sarcastic, encouraging diffidence, heartening the timid, begetting ease by its own poise and assurance. Though not beautiful, Madame de Beauvau had features winning in the candor and sincerity of their expression. One charm, however, outshone all the rest: her conversational talent, that fine art of talk which was her charm and her glory. And what gifts she brought to it, if we may trust her contemporaries: a loftiness of spirit, a warmth of heart easily moved to unforced enthusiasm, the balm of a caress and a force of logic wholly masculine, wielded by the delicate instinct of a woman!

she always loses. The only fruit of her assiduity at Court and a life of intrigue is the money she draws from the King to pay her debts and contract new ones, of which she disposes when she can. She made a great show of zeal to obtain an appointment as lady of the palace to the Queen; yet, on the morrow, this princess of Lorraine thought nothing of riding abroad on the front seat of Madame de Pompadour's coach."

There was still something in this *salon* of an old and unblemished honor, a kind of glow of domestic virtue, which attracted a following. Affection and respect were the due of a home, the happiness of which offered a shining example of conjugal love. The Beauvau were loved and esteemed for their loftiness of character, their independence, their scorn of patronage, despite alliances which made them rank high at Court, and for the constancy and devotion they showed Choiseul after his disgrace, their support of Necker through all the variations of his credit, and their tempering of the fall of Loménie de Brienne. So society flocked to this *salon*, where it found beside Madame de Beauvau two other delightful women: one, her daughter-in-law, the Princess de Poix, lacked beauty (she even limped a little) but she had a complexion so fair and so much intelligence of expression, that one saw nothing else; the other, the Princesse d'Henin, Madame de Mauconseil's daughter, married to the younger Beauvau, was the spoiled darling she remained all her life, an impish little chit, an artful, arrogant, willful weathervane, humored, however, for her fundamental goodness of heart, her gayety and her wit, a wit keen, discriminating and observing, which originated many a happy saying on the courtesy of the male.

Different again was the house of the Maréchale d'Anville, which basked in the esteem acquired by the la Rochefoucaulds, the esteem of the hereditary virtues and bounties of that noble race, a breed no dignities or offices had been able to corrupt. Pursuing their tradition of lavish philanthropy, Madame d'Anville exhibited a passion for public improvement, or rather for public perfection. Her heart was open to every utopia, her mind to every fond boom. A friend of the philosophers, a friend too of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, whom we find so often alighting at her table when the guests are rising to go to the Academy, Madame d'Anville was the woman to whom Voltaire turned for a safe-conduct, the woman of all women in France most devoted to the fortunes of Turgot and the glory of his ideas.

From all this zeal she reaped only a lampoon showing her, after his fall, tumbled from a gig, hand in hand with the late Comptroller-General, on a heap of straw, with this tag on her skirts: *Freedom, freedom, give us freedom!*

The tenets of the philosophers and the spirit of the Encyclopedia found asylum in the house of another great lady, who befriended the Abbé de Prades and saved him from persecution: the dowager Duchesse d'Aiguillon. A sunken mouth, a crooked nose, and a mad eye had long failed to impair the beauty of her brilliant complexion. Heavy of build, she was equally massive of mind; but in a woman whose every trait bespoke strength, strength redeemed everything. By her inspired, her almost unbalanced eloquence, she could astound and convince. Intellect, conversation, ideas, moods and appearance, all were branded with the same sign—power.

Amid all these aristocratic *salons*, where the new doctrines found so many echoes, so much applause, the complicity of such eager passions, the encouragement of such warm friendships, one woman made her *salon* the center of the protests, resistance and wrath the philosophers delighted in arousing. Of this personal foe of the *Encyclopediacs*, this heroic opponent of the philosophic party, the Princesse de Robecq, we have a portrait, which lends her death almost the aureole of a canonization: Saint-Aubin's drawing, which shows her in her last hour, with her head on the pillow, invests her with the sanctity of death. We meet her once more, recognize her ruefully, in a painful pamphlet of the time, incarnating Humanity, with peace on her brow, large blue eyes under black brows, and blond hair; very bland, very sweet. But what energy in that face! This is the woman who, wounded in her heart, not in her head, by the blasphemies of the philosophers, incites Religion to reprisals and arms Satire against its authors! The comedy of *The Philosophers* is worked out in her salon, under her direction. Palissot writes it, his elbow jogged, his pen spurred by a failing Muse of thirty-six springs who, with

only a few months yet to live, kindles her pamphleteer, fires and inspires him and herself dictates the big scene of the play. And when at last it is written and the command to perform it obtained—by a strange favor, from the philosophers' own minister, Choiseul—the Princesse de Robecq has but one boon to ask of God: that she may live to see the first night and cry with her last breath, "O Lord, let now Thy Servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have beheld vengeance."

Glancing now at the salon of another but more lenient zealot, the Comtesse de Lamarck, sister to the Duc de Noailles, a worthy, if somewhat affected lady, happily devoid, however, of all arrogance of rank, we see a brilliant coquette showing us the tip of her toe and the slope of her lovely hands: a crack charmer, this former Madame Pater, pretty as ever under her new name of Madame Newkerque, pretty as she will be long after as Madame de Champcenets.

Among the six or seven leading *salons* of the period we must not overlook that of the elder Madame de Ségur, a natural daughter of the Regent who, despite her years, was still blessed with no little wit and fun, delighted in youthful friends and entertained them with her reminiscences, in which the past rustled its dust with a chuckle. Delightfully sweet and swagger, her daughter-in-law, the wife of the Maréchal de Ségur, aided her with the honors of her *salon*.

There was one *salon*—Madame de Noisy's—the high sport of which was the witty and wolfish war there waged by a Prince of the blood and a lieutenant of Police, the Prince de Conti and Monsieur de Marville. Leaving this *salon* to patrol her son through the ball at the Opera, Monsieur de Marville found the floor teeming with the sluts of the streets, mustered at the bidding of the Prince to greet him with a rain of abuse. But on the morrow of an evening spent with Madame de Noisy, the Prince, setting out, *incognito*, at dawn for an estate where he was awaited for early dinner, found the road bristling, through hamlet

and dale, with municipal officers in full dress, armed with allocutions so lengthy that it was seven at night before he reached his destination.

In a house in the Place du Carrousel society found a lady of regular features and singular beauty, Madame de Brionne, a Venus, as the phrase goes, but with none of the florid venustity affected by Madame d'Egmont: a Venus who resembled Minerva. Every inch a princess, with all the outward port of pride, she was dignified, imposing, stately in bearing, severe in manner; and, holding ever her distance, seemed to reckon every glance a favor, every word a service, every familiarity a benefaction. Her mind was as her face: vivacity or warmth she had none; but for her sure judgment, her fine tact, for a rare perspicacity gained in the practise of public affairs, for a facility of language susceptible of lofty flights, for her constancy in friendship, and that peculiar effect of Minerva-ness and cold presence, the world paid her homage in darkening her doors with classic deliberation. Though she declined dedications and professed a high-bred scorn for the musk of the verse-maker, so sweet to the society she kept, Madame de Brionne indulged her intimates on occasion with the respite of a reading; it was at her table that Marmontel gave the world those *Moral Tales*, which dimmed so many bright eyes with dismal tears.

As dinners patterned after those of Madame de Brionne were now offering competition, in certain houses, to the customary supper, the fashion came in of after-dinner dancing. The most popular of these dances were given by the Comtesse de Brienne, who had brought her husband a great fortune; by the Marquise du Châtelet, one of the most reputable women at Court; and by Madame de Monaco, who was reckoned a beauty, despite her over-full face and flat features.

Society favored the *salon* of another great lady, of large affections, to whom it attributed generously the Archbishop of Lyons, Monsieur de Montazet, Radix de Saint-Foix, and

some others. But this was the only generosity society showed Madame de Mazarin, who seems to have been cursed by a malign fairy. She was fair, her friends found her fat; unspoiled, but so, said Madame de Luxembourg, was butcher's meat; her diamonds were fine, yet, when she wore them, she was likened to a chandelier; polite and obliging, she was thought artful; witty, when she was at her ease, she was ridiculed as obtuse; and though she devoured her fortune, she was reputed a hoarder. Nothing in this luckless lady found favor with the public, neither her beauty nor her wit nor her dresses nor her prodigality; and her *jinks* extended even to her parties. Long had Paris laughed at the strange appearance of a flock of sheep, newly soaped and bcribboned, that were to have filed by behind a transparency, led by an Operatic shepherdess, in her mirror-lined ball-room; bewildered and dazzled, they had charged helter-skelter through the *salon*, and what an uproar! what shattered mirrors! what headlong couples indignantly capsized! This little misadventure, however, had not halted the ball; and Madame de Mazarin's *salons* continued to be the leading ball-room of that dancing age, which reflected the revolutions of its manners in the evolutions of its steps. To the minuet, slow, stately and monotonous, had succeeded nimbler, fleetier, livelier dances. Now comes the reign of the quadrille, and if you foot it at all, you must learn the *New Fling*, the *Miniken Favors*, the *New Brunswick*, the *little Viennese Step*, the *Belzamire*, the *Charmante*, the *Fair Amélie*, the *Belle Alliance*, and the *Pauline*.¹ But the fig-

¹ An enumeration of the quadrilles of the eighteenth century might be prolonged indefinitely. The *Répertoire du bal* or *Practice and Theory of Quadrille Dancing*, by the Sieur de la Cuisse, Master of Dancing, 1762, gives, for but a few years: the *Marquise*; the *Mine Own*; the *Eccentric*; the *Intime*; the *Daquin's Drum*; the *Good Faith*; the *Broken Wheels*; the *Dubois*; the *Pleasures of Clichy*; the *Fleury*, or *Pastimes of Nancy*; the *Revels of Paphos*; the *New Year*; the *Baudri*; the *Chatterboxes*; the *Dainty*; the *Cocotte*; the *Pretty Fellows*; the *Strasbourgeoise*; the *New Cascade of Saint-Cloud*; the *Pity 'tis Brief*; the *Caprices*; the *Joys of Greece*; the *Clairon*; the *Marseillaise*; the *Rosalie*; the *Echoes of Passy*; the *Cooing Dove*; the *Four Winds*; the *Gardel*; the *Striped Tiger*; the *My Ladies' Airing*, etc., etc.; without counting all the new German quadrilles.

ures of these new dances are soon banished by a new foreign step. They vanish overnight before the triumphant *Allemande*, our one conquest from the Seven Years' War; this dance, which now reigns supreme, is represented by Saint-Aubin in the *Bal paré*. And a charming dance it is: all intertwinings and weaving of women to and fro under the love-bridge formed by the arms of their partners, while hands cling, linked, back to back. On its first appearance in France the *Allemande* was still "uncouthly gay"; but as soon as it touches the parquets of Paris it is transformed by French grace. It loses its Germanic weight and boisterousness and takes on a new fusion, flow and ease, as it whirls to the tap of a brisk cadence. "Voluptuous, passionate, slow, swift, careless, fiery, tender, touching, light, exuberant"—the *Allemande* discloses all the charms of a woman's body: it gives play to all the fleeting expressions of her face. And by the freedom of its poses, the weaving of arms and the wedding of hands, the running glances that head over heel seem to toss a smile or a kiss, it unites its couples in a languor so delightful, that the age regards it as one of the most insidious perils to a woman's honor.

A lady whose talent lay in wearing her faults and infirmities with an air, the Princesse de Bouillon, made her house on the Quai Malaquais famous for her suppers for the fair; among her intimates were the Duchesse de Lauzun, Madame de la Tremouille, the Marquise de la Jamahique, and Madame d'Henin. The sweet of these suppers, scandal says, was the arrival of Monsieur de Coigny on behalf of Madame d'Henin and of Monsieur de Castries, no less assiduous toward Madame de Bouillon.

A cousin of Madame de Pompadour, playfully dubbed by the favorite "my mop," Madame d'Amblimont, held forth at the Arsenal; at one of her *fêtes* Monsieur de Choiseul made Monsieur de Jarente the butt of two actresses disguised as clerics, who appeared on the stage after wheedling the good prelate's heart with their woes and there ran

over, for the delight of the public, the scene they had just enacted in life.

A woman by no means malicious, but pitilessly inquisitive and cruelly indiscreet, jealous too of her fame as a smart and amusing minx, Madame d'Husson kept a *salon*, which was always full of a hum of stories and a hiss of tattle; slander sitting down to scandal. But she never lacked company, though her guests seemed to feel no obligation to respect their hostess.

At the house of the Comtesse de Sassenage were held balls and functions much favored by the youngest and most charming sets in Paris. For the privilege of appearing there, of obtaining from the Maréchal de Biron an invitation at first refused, Letorière endured three blood-lettings in one day.

Delightful too were the suppers of Madame Filleul, lively, gay, radiant with the budding beauty of the young Comtesse de Seran, her charm, and that of the clever young Julie, whom later we shall meet as Madame de Marigny.

Life, activity, delicate pleasures, enlightened entertainments, music, concerts, plays, all the pleasures which appeal to the mind and the heart, are to be found in one *salon*, which is a sort of rehearsal-hall of the *Menus-Plaisirs*, the Opera, and the playhouse; this is the *salon* of the Duchesse de Villeroy, a sister of the Duc d'Aumont, the King's first gentleman of the Chamber; and this *salon* is the image of its mistress, ever active and afoot, buzzing and breathless, a hubbub personified, "a hurricane disguised as a draught," a woman for whom the stage is life, rapture, passion. It is here that censored plays are performed and even spectacular operas mounted. She brings Clairon back to the stage, mounts plays at Court, revives *Athalie* in Versailles. And all the while witty; with a wit inflamed by contradiction, with sudden thrusts, with phrases that spatter the faces of the Court-fry, with all sorts of searching flashes on men and the works of men's minds and the activities of states-

men. She seems to be forever changing her mind for her memory, and memory for inspiration, running from rôle to rôle, always impassioned, extreme, *hubbubbling*, impulsive in all but her hatreds and feuds, irresponsible except when she is assuming a part, discoursing sentiment, and pledging a favor; and then she almost persuades you that she is sincere, that she has a heart, then you succumb to gratitude and swear that she is, as she seems, the most generous of friends, the most zealous of patrons.

When the Duc and Duchesse de Choiseul were not in attendance at Versailles, in the days of his ministry, when, in the hour of disgrace, they left Chanteloup and set up in Paris, they displayed in their town house all the splendor of a princely, an all but regal hospitality. Their formal reception was not at dinner, which daily was a matter of a mere dozen covers; it was at supper. In a vast hall, which a fireplace and a pair of stoves failed to heat, by the light of seventy and two tapers, around a great gaming table where the guests played a game made up of a hodge-podge of all games, the *Macédoine*, at other and smaller tables devoted to whist, *piquet*, and *comets*, at others where *tric-trac* tuned its clatter, in the *salons* where billiard balls ran the table, in the *salons* where some sought solace in a book, assembled all the society of that day, great lords and little, the highest ladies, and the youngest and the prettiest; all drawn up, deep set, around the adorable Duchesse de Choiseul, in flattering Court: Reason, they called her, fresh from a warm heart; the tenderest woman of parts of her time; a minister's lady to whom Madame de Pompadour granted the great art of always saying the ripe thing at the right time; an admirable hostess, who could be natural without ever letting fall an unkind or too-pointed word.—At a quarter of ten, the steward, Lesueur, would come in to look over the company, and, at his discretion, would order fifty, sixty, or eighty covers. These suppers were held every day except Friday and Sunday; those days the Duke and Duchess reserved for their visits to Madame du Deffand or

some other boon friend. The example of this superb splendor, this prodigal, this ruinous hospitality, absorbing every penny and more of the yearly income of the Choiseuls (800,000 pounds), brought a great change into the habits of society; suppers by invitation, *les soupers priés*, went out of fashion; the wealthy houses all prided themselves on holding open spread for all comers—an innovation quite disastrous, which soon transformed the *salon* into a banal, almost public resort, where conversation was drowned in din and society no longer knew its own.

Monsieur de Choiseul presided over another *salon*, equally devoted to his name and his fame, equally concerned in his fortunes, the *salon* congregated by his sister, the Duchesse de Grammont. Desirable, in the words of Lauzun, desirable despite her forbidding features and voice, amusing though not strikingly witty—no quotable phrases to boast of—Madame de Grammont held her friends by qualities of a somewhat masculine order, and above all by a studied courtesy extending to the least details, the finest distinctions; never would she let a visitor enter her rooms without rising to receive him, engaging him in conversation and ending the interview punctiliously before resuming her seat. Her *salon* was besieged from early morning till late at night; the hostess was scarcely awake before her door was thronged by a host of princes and the most highly placed men and women of Versailles. All the politics of the day came to light there; all the secrets of the Court, even State secrets, drifted in hour after hour; her drawing-room had the authority, the activity, the secret channels and lurking and hazardous quicksands of the anteroom of a royal favorite. From morning to night holders and withholders of favor and place drew up to consult the judgment of a woman long conversant with public affairs; submitting their plans, confiding their hopes to this voluntary exile from Versailles who, in Paris, surveyed everything of moment at Court and of mystery in the ministries. Yet, great though the zest for politics was in this *salon*, letters were

not overlooked: they offered a delightful byplay at her suppers of five and twenty covers.

In the *salon* Brancas, which Grimm accuses of recalling too assiduously the hôtel Rambouillet, presided, peaceably enough, that lovely Duchesse de Brancas who suggested, in the company of the Duchesse de Cossé, the repose of the globe beside its movement. She was the best-behaved of ladies, and the laziest: Grace lounging by the fire in an easy-chair.

A woman clever indeed but itching to prove it, pretentious and affected; a woman who by labor and exertion became the counterpart of Madame d'Egmont—they were called the two lackadaisies of the day—Madame de Tessé entertained in Paris and later at Chaville, in that opulent *château*, of which her husband carried a view inlaid on his snuff-box, with, for a motto, this line from *Phèdre*:

*Je lui bâtis un temple et pris soin de l'orner.*¹

The *salon* of Madame de Tessé resembled its mistress: an involved style reigned there, a false delicacy made it cold and constrained. A certain number of prudes came to supper, less for the supper served by a cook sung by Senac, than to let it be known that "they went there."

The example of these receptions in the country had been given by Madame de Mauconseil at Bagatelle in the Bois de Boulogne, a pretty country-seat humming with *fêtes*, diversions, surprises, and the mirific changes of a pantomime. Paris had rung with the revels offered there to King Stanislaus in 1756; Paris had marveled at the *fêtes* she gave every year for the Maréchal de Richelieu, *fêtes* usually conceived by Favart, the program of which fills two manuscript volumes in the Library of the Arsenal.

About the time when Madame de Tessé took up her residence at Chaville, Madame de Boufflers, abandoning the Temple after the Prince de Conti's death, invited her friends and her old set to a pretty little house in Auteuil, which roused the envy of the Princesse de Lamballe. Three times

¹ I reared her a temple and dearly adorned it.

a week she gave a great supper there; and every day she had ten or twelve people in to dinner.

The lover of Clairon had a mother, Madame la Comtesse de Valbelle, who kept a *salon* in Courbevoie, where the company was odious; but the play soon ransomed the company. Here you might pore over the lustiest *cavagnol*; and all night long, from the ring of women stacking their chips and their points, feverishly *sprinkling* the cloth, you would hear shriek after shriek: "I had the most unheard-of *jinks* to-night . . . I lost a chance . . . I held ten faces, and I don't believe I took three hands."

Finding that supper had lost all gayety, that no one touched champagne now, that you were ready to pass out with boredom, that women, instead of bringing life, only made for constraint and solemnity, Madame de Luxembourg conceived the experiment of stag suppers. In opposition to these stag suppers, and in protest against them, the Comtesse de Custine waged supper for women, on such days as the men went to Versailles for the night, to hunt with the King on the morrow. These suppers were reserved mysteriously for the hostess, Madame de Louvois, Madame de Crenay, Madame d'Harville, and the charming and naïve Madame de Vaubecourt. Who could have foreseen that she would end her days in a convent, after an over-loud adventure?

An amusing set, youthful and lively, at the head of which we spy the Cardinal de Rohan, surrounds in her retreat in the Abbaye au Bois the Marquise de Marigny, the wife of Madame de Pompadour's brother, rejoicing now in a separation and a raise of 20,000 pounds in her pension. Our old friend, Julie Filleul that was, is still one of the prettiest women of her time; and relieved at last of her husband's jealousy, rid of his moody affection and vexing attentions, she seems to be enjoying a new lease of life, a new bloom of beauty, youth and joy, in the exercise of all those blandishments, which are ever enlarging the acquaintance of charmer and charmed.

Madame de Rochefort, "that sparkling ramrod" Beau-dau calls her, held a *salon* at the Luxembourg where politics, great and little, held the floor. She was a woman of poise and intelligence, of delicate instincts, gentle and amiable, well-informed and unaffected, of somewhat colorless charm; her one title to fame lay in being the *decent* friend of the Duc de Nivernois, "the high priestess of her sect," says a woman. To retain this faithful frequenter of her salon and secure every evening a spirit so light and endearing, so happily inclined to her own, she persuaded Monsieur de Nivernois to decline a ministry on the death of Louis XV. Madame de Rochefort's *salon*, when it was not restricted to the inner fold which flocked there to hear a new fable by the aristocratic fabulist, boasted some sounding names. To the surviving followers of the hôtel Brancas, the Maurepas, the Flamarens, the Mirepoix, the d'Ussés, the Bernis, our elegant bluestocking added in her latter days a new hoard of acquaintances, the Belle-Isles, the Cossé-Brissac, with the old Duke and whilom Governor of Paris, the fine old gentleman whom Walpole met there in scarlet stockings, the Castellane, Mesdames de Boisgelin and de Cambis, and Monsieur de Keralio, who lived at the Luxembourg. That *man's man*, Mirabeau's father, was an intimate of her *salon*, concerning himself politely with her tortoisés and the ill-cooked pancakes of her table. Many English men and women were introduced there by the late Ambassador to London; among others Lord Chatham's sister, an Englishwoman enamored of our eighteenth century France, and various other foreigners of distinction, such as the Baron von Gleichen and that able and original Italian, Gatti. In this *salon* the world listened spellbound to the imperious voice of Duclos and the unholy fervor of Diderot, which so impressed the old Marquis de Mirabeau. And a goodly sprinkling of bishops and abbés mingled with women like Madame Lecomte, who was living openly with Wattelet, or like *la Billioni*, the singer. Sometimes a stage would be set up, and the actors of the *Comédie italienne* would perform a

proverb composed by the Duc de Nivernois, a proverb interlarded with light airs and couplets addressed to the eminent ladies and prelates in the audience.

An agreeable resort was the concert given by the Comtesse d'Houdetot, where her sister-in-law's voice, of no great range but tastefully trained, rendered successfully the operatic arias of *Atys* and *Roland*, sung to the clavichord.

At one time the great houses of the eighteenth century went in for what were called *rustic days*: the guests came for the day and found all the pleasures of life on a country estate. There was also a vogue for a time of playing *coffee house*, the ladies assuming the dress and the rôles of counter-queens. We see them, in a letter of Madame d'Épinay, in English gowns, with muslin aprons, pointed scarves and tiny hats, seated at a kind of counter piled with oranges, crackers, pamphlets and public prints of every description. Around the counter little tables simulate those of the coffee house, set out with cards, counters, chequers, draught-boards and *trictracs*. On the mantelshelf cordials are aligned. The dining-room is filled with other small tables, laid out with dishes—an *entrée* seasoned with a sweet, supplemented by a fowl and rice or a roast glowing on the sideboard. The servants have put by their liveries; they are dressed in white coats and caps; and they answer to a *Boy, Boy!* as they serve in supper for this curious social extravaganza, which has become the fad, which is attended, like a ball, by invitation, which is followed by music, pantomimes, often by improvised *proverbs*, of which the audience must guess the text. What *fête* indeed would be complete without its *proverbs*? It is a fad, following on that of rhyming-tags, which rouses all the faculties of female sagacity, which attains the proportions of a crusade. But they are all outdone by Madame de Genlis and forced to follow in her footsteps, when she organizes one day in the *salon* of that Madame de Crenay who, for all her bulk, loved nothing so much as a measure, the marvelous quadrille of the *proverbs*. Gardel, who takes as his text, *Yield a pace the better to*

gain a foot, makes of it the daintiest of countersteps. Madame de Lauzun dances with Monsieur de Belzunce in a costume so plain that it can mean but one thing: *Fair fame is worth more than gilded dame*. Madame de Marigny, paired with Monsieur de Saint-Julien in black-face, sweeps his cheek with her handkerchief at each turn and return of the dance to signify: "*Your Blackamoor's brow will never come clean, my Lady!*" And the other couples, the Duchesse de Liancourt and the Comte de Baulainvilliers, Madame de Genlis and the Vicomte de Laval, are equally eloquent.

From time to time new fads of this sort sweep through the *salons*, titillating the ladies, reigning for an hour and vanishing overnight. The passion for *proverbs* is succeeded by a craze for *synonyms*, a craze that turns to an epidemic on the appearance of Roubaud's book, the manual of the art, to which Madame de Créqui alludes beamingly in her letters. Then the success of *Nina* and of *King Lear* at the *Comédie* overthrow Roubaud and his synonyms; and now the *salons* quake with gloomy little romances, lugubrious tales, and lachrymose recitations delivered by pretty young Muses—tears are so sweet, so sweet.

One winter, a new sport springs up. You are no longer invited to supper and dancing. You are invited, two weeks ahead, to an evening of blind man's buff or tug-o'-war; and, supper hurriedly bestowed and your mother-in-law committed to the whist-table, you are free to follow a sport which is more than a little unworthy of the women and the society of that time.—Then comes lotto.

Among the great *salons* of the aristocracy, which survive to the close of the century, Monsieur de Ségur mentions that of Madame de Montesson, whose masters of ceremony were Dauberval and Carmontelle. The ingratiating advances of the hostess, her many efforts to secure herself friends and make her false situation overlooked, a splendor she was careful to keep free of offense, a luxury she tempered with the simplicity of good taste, shabby plays but

bravely performed, to which she was perhaps ruefully partial, and the excellent spread that washed them down: these inducements attracted an enormous following to a *salon*, where the Duc d'Orléans was plain Monsieur de Montesson. And little by little the fashion of receptions declining, the great houses of ample hospitality closing their doors or retrenching, the diplomatic corps no longer receiving, the residence of Madame de Montesson became for a time, under Louis XVI, the leading resort of the capital, which had nowhere else to go save to the dinners of the Maréchal de Biron and the Fridays of the Duchesse de la Vallière.

In the world of great ladies there was one, whom you were almost sure never to find at home but who was to be met with wherever the world went. In this lady, who seemed to have fled from the hands of Nature, as Madame de Graffigny said of France, when she was compounded as yet but of fire and air, in Madame la Duchesse de Chaulnes, heart, soul, senses, character—all was wit. Her every impulse sprang from and turned to wit. Whether in argument or gossip or conversation, her tongue ran only to the tune and on the theme of wit. The spoiled darling, the holy mischief of that age, in which one needed so much wit to have enough, she had too much. She flung it about her in showers, madly, impenitently, in fits and starts, in sudden huffs, in phrases that landed like a slapstick, in cracks and antics and caricature and mimicry, in a helter-skelter smear, a deluge of derision, murderous epithets, outlandish metaphors, lampoons snipped out with a shears; and all unawares, without aiming at the rôle which Madame de Luxembourg was to play, her violent irony, teeming with mischief, did in effect a kind of police duty, throughout all the great *salons* of the aristocracy, over everything mean and dull, comparable to that which the judgment of Madame Geoffrin exercised, in another set, over the sins against reason and good sense.

She dared anything, with the insolence of a born Duchess.

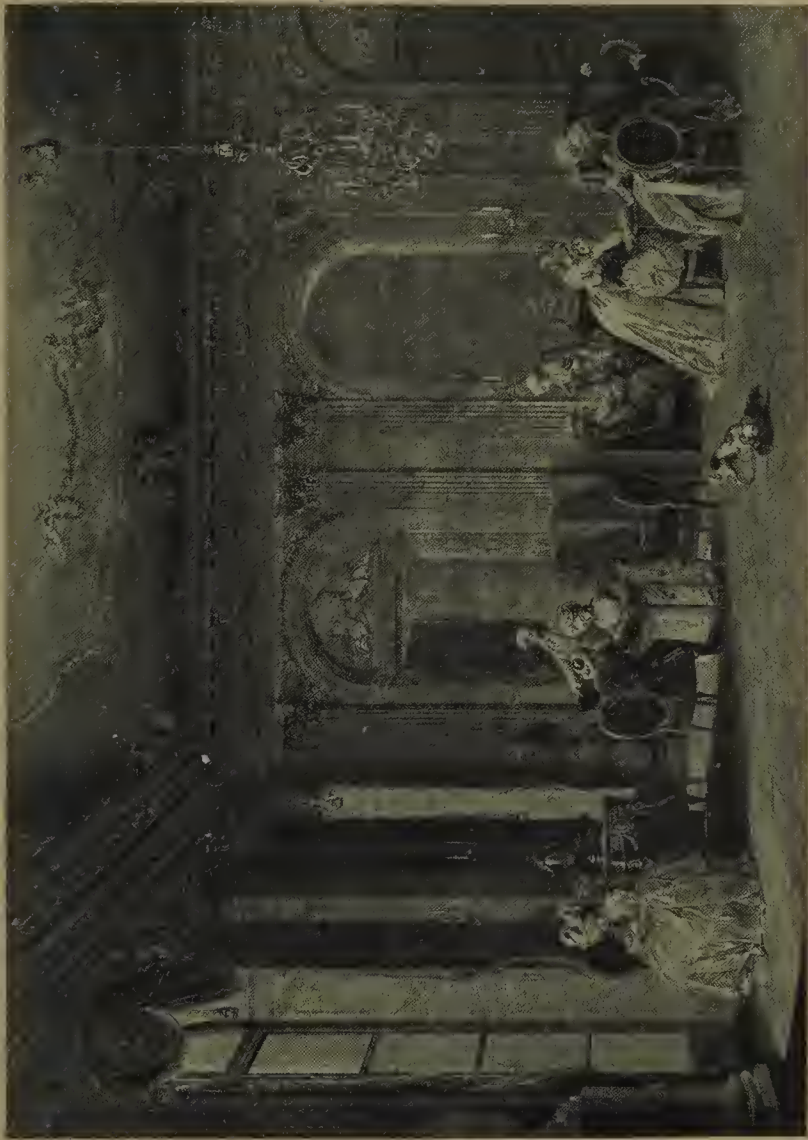


Photo Girardon

LAVREINCE—L'Assemblée au salon

“What’s it good for—a genius?” she said once. When she had perpetrated her misalliance, when she too was *Jack’s little Jill*, as a woman of quality married to a bourgeois was called in her presence, “Two such freaks in a century?” she cried. “I doubt it. I took the curse off it: I did it too demmed well.” But she could lance as well as belabor. Amazed at the diffidence of a woman who had desired eagerly to meet her, at the embarrassment which a friend of that woman explained as the dread of encountering a person of her parts: “Ha!” says Madame de Chaulnes, “that fear, my dear, is a fool’s wit!” *At random* might be writ over her life, as the motto of her mind: her moods were all impulse, and Senac de Meilhan has painted her to the life in likening her brain to the Sun Chariot driven by Phaëton. A brain full of flames and rolling at random, it blinds by the brilliance of its sudden flashes. Her mad genius, her irresponsible antics, and her flashes of sense; the heat and disorder of her ideas, the exuberance of her whole nature, the very fire of her eyes and her gestures, thrilled all she met; and to a man all crowded around the Duchess of the waxen skin and eagle eyes.

Immediately below the *salons* of the aristocracy we find those of the financial world. The foremost of these was that of the patriarch of the marts, old Samuel Bernard, laden with years and bullion—a house of high living and high play. Here all Paris found its way; here, in his search for good company, President Hénault met such people as the Comte de Verdun, a great *janséniste* and patron of chorus girls; the Prince de Rohan; Madame de Montbazou; Desforts, the future Comptroller-General; Madame Martel, the reigning beauty of Paris; the Maréchal de Villeroy, trailing the dangerous eyes of Madame de Sagonne, Bernard’s daughter (he hunted undisturbed on condition he keep his nose out of the thirty-two millions’ bankruptcy proceedings Bernard was burying on the Place de Lyons); Brossore, who became staff-secretary to the Queen; Madame de Maisons, the sister of the Maréchal de Villars; Haut-

Roche, a Councillor of Parliament; and Madame Fontaine, la Dancourt's daughter and Bernard's mistress.

Another *salon* of which we find mention in the *Mémoires of a Man of Quality* was that of Law. Here people gathered for a supper enlivened by the genial charm of the hostess, to listen until midnight or even later, until office hours, to a thousand and one delightful quips from the lips of a man, who carried the fortune of a nation on his shoulders and who felt the credit of France slowly crumbling under him.

Beside this *salon* shone the *salon* of Madame de Pléneuf, a woman made, in the words of Saint-Simon, "to pierce the clouds of the Opera and present us the Deity." To this spectacular beauty Madame de Pléneuf added wit, a spirit of intrigue, and a kind of high-handed grace. Her *salon* also boasted the charm of her daughter, later Madame de Prie, whom d'Argenson calls "the peaseblossom of the pods of the period": a nymph to behold, with a delicate face, pretty cheeks, pale hair, eyes a trifle oblique but bright and gay, this attractive young person possessed the full complement of what were then called "those what-would-you-call-'ems that finish a man." Music was the great charm of this *salon*, and it is here, patronized by Madame de Prie, that the idea originates of those concerts *degli Paganti* offered by Crozat and immortalized by one of the last strokes of Watteau's crayon in that drawing, light as the mood of an Italian *aria*, which we see in the Museum of the Louvre;¹ the first of those great concerts of the time which were to be followed by the famous musicals of the hôtel Lutbert, presided over by the President's daughter, and frequented by the most appreciative audiences in France.—And sometimes the good company of the time went as far

¹The three virtuosi of this concert represented by Watteau were Antoine, the flutist, the Italian singer Pacini, and another singer, a woman, d'Argenon. Mathieu Marais tells us that Mademoiselle d'Argenon, who sang remarkably, was a niece of the painter Lafosse, who lodged with Crozat; the occasion was a concert of Italian music in a series gotten up by Madame de Prie, who had selected sixty subscribers paying each 400 pounds a year.

as Plaisance, to the handsome *château* of the Paris-Montmartels, where, after dinner, a lottery of magnificent jewels poured diamonds into the women's laps.

Money has always had its glory in France, and the traditions inaugurated by Bullion, who served his guests with medallions of gold, is maintained by the financiers who follow him. But dealers develop in the eighteenth century; they take on the delicacy and refinement of their times. Their bounty is no longer crude or ill-bred; it becomes sedulously correct, discreet, and courteous, it acquires charm and style. Their opulence no longer stuns; it is no longer a slap in the stomach; it grows witty and resourceful. It prides itself on its aptness, refinement and grace, in which a feminine caprice seems to vie with the vanity of a great lord. It rises to the charming attentions, the prodigal humors of a Bouret who, unable to tempt a lady on a milk diet with a quart of peas (a hundred crown picking!) has them served to his milch-cow.

In this financial society, in this caste of coin, the long arm of money twitches with one supreme greed, that of in-veigling, quite baldly, the quality. No effort, no hardship, no expense is reckoned too heavy to gain an honor so disputed as that of entertaining a courtier or two and some few titled women. It is the obsession and often the ruin of the *financier* and the *financière*. And how freely they lavish their money on their homes, their furniture, their table and their entertainments, to lure the quality to look in on them, to sit down for a moment and let slip the roll of a title, which they rush to pick up and clink on their counters! What will they not do to secure those visits, to shine their new gold on some mellow old name? Anything, everything: obeisances, embassies innumerable: the visiting list submitted to some man or woman of Versailles; his shall be the choice, he shall bring whom he pleases, the *salon* is his, and his the key.

The leading financial *salon* of the eighteenth century was that of Grimod de la Reynière, "the best board in

town," it was called.¹ *Née* de Jarente and allied by her own blood to a great house, Madame de la Reynière was bitter at heart as a financier's lady, debarred by that fact from Court. If we may trust the portrait Madame de Genlis drew of her in *Adèle et Théodore* as Madame d'Olcyc, she could not hear the King, the Queen, Versailles, or a Court dress mentioned, anything, in fact, which reminded her of the sphere to which her money could not attain, without an inner commotion so violent that it betrayed itself instantly; she would break off the conversation. To cheat and salve her heart, she made the Court come to her. An exquisite table, marvelous *fêtes*, a luxury that rivaled royalty's in its profusion, drew to her house a flock of the finest feather, and she made close friends of the Comtesse de Melfort and the Comtesse de Tessé and habitual guests of the best names in the Almanack. Thence, of course, a great baiting of rancor and ingratitude ensued, not to mention the jealousy aroused by her beauty, her splendor of life, her consummate elegance of dress, and her aristocratic ease of manner. There were tongues enough to exaggerate the foibles of this delicate and languid *financière*, who was forever lamenting her health, and but few to recall her goodness, charity and generosity, which amply atoned for those infirmities and little vanities so cruelly mortified by the boon friends, suppers, and *swineries* of her son.²—There would seem to be a degree of wealth, which is inexcusable and at which no virtue can escape censure.

Turning from the *salon* Grimod de la Reynière, it is but a step to the *salon* Trudaine, known currently as "the

¹"Have you read the Two Encomiums?—Ah, Lud! Young Cossé is dead, I'm heartbroken!—And Monsieur de Clermont losing his wife!—And Monsieur Chambonneau taking back his; what do you say to that? Cruel, is it not cruel?—By-the-bye, I hear that two ladies are appointed to Madame Elisabeth. Of course I know!—Zounds! And I had my correspondence addressed to Madame de Boucherolles!—*D'ye think ye'll be supping at Madame de la Reynière's tonight?*" Such, according to Walpole, was the stenographic transcript of the talk of the town, at its most superfine finical, on September 9, 1775, at a quarter before twelve in the morning.

²*Nini*, the delicate modeller of Chaumont, made, in 1769, a bust of Suzanne Jarente de la Reynière, which is the masterpiece of his medallions in clay.

house of the philosophic bachelor," where supper every night and two great dinners a week attracted dukes and peers, ambassadors and foreigners of note, the highest nobility, plain gentry, men of letters, the gown, the counter, all the name and fame of Paris, in fact. Here the best company met as man to man; here the most substantial conversation was to be had as well as the wittiest chatter. But the perfect fusion of this society was hindered somewhat by the hostess, Madame Trudaine, a woman witty, amiable and sympathetic, but given to a pretentious scorn for the prejudices of the period; her silent and slightly critical attention created about her a superior chill.

Ease and geniality, on the other hand, were the note of another house renowned for its table, perhaps the most lavish in Paris, and for its highly popular concerts. This house, Monsieur Laborde's, was run by a woman of character and sense, more discreet than her sisters, less infatuated with rank, welcoming politely but not over-warmly her great ladies, and maintaining her dignity in a *salon*, where the world found a cozy corner and a little circle of chosen friends.

But what life and activity in another *salon*, of which hardly a name survives, Madame Dumoley's: a *salon* not unlike those palaces of the Place Vendôme or Place Royale, where unwittingly such comic scenes were added to *Turcaret*, where no one who arrived on foot or without lace might be admitted. Madame Dumoley was a woman who spent the week counting the men she would entertain next Monday and turning on her tongue the compliments she foresaw on the splendor of her furniture, the luxury of her table, and the marmorial polish of her bank account. Accommodating her welcome to the fortune and rank of her guests, flaunting her titled catches, hoisting the most extreme of Court airs, she occasionally condescended to receive a man for his wit. This concession saved her somewhat from utter fatuity. Madame Dumoley bore some traces of a pleasing face, a veneer of manner, and a coy

little motherwit of her own, which could put pen to paper on occasion and draw a funny little picture of "our Abbé Delille in zigzags." And the portrait of the *financière* will be complete, if we add with the malice of a contemporary: "She makes no allowance for love in her budget of bliss. At the waters, on her travels, or in the bosom of Nature, she welcomes such little regards as may be safely tendered without tax on the heart and repayed with sentiments well-nigh unsullied; for she would be incapable of advancing more forthright favors to any but a man of title."

But the financial *salon* where the world found the liveliest pleasures, the most animated *fêtes*, an unflagging play in progress, was the house of Monsieur de la Popelinière in Passy, where Gossec and Gaiffre led the concerts and Deshayes, the ballet-master of the *Comédie italienne*, was responsible for the interludes; a house that was itself a theater, with a stage equipped like a little Opera and corridors crowded with artists, writers, musicians and dancers, who ate, slept, and lodged there, as they would in a rooming-house: a house hospitable to all the arts, full of the hum of all sorts of talents, a downright Opera lobby, where all the violins, soprani and tenori of Italy alighted, where dancing and singing and the warbling of airs great and small never left off from morning till night! As if the days of reception were not enough, nor those great Tuesdays attended by Olivet, Rameau, Madame Riccoboni, Vauconson, the poet Bertin, and Vanloo and his wife (she of the nightingale's voice) Sundays as well saw all Paris pricking for morning Mass with music by Gossec, swelled by latecomers for dinner at noon, and homecomers at five for a spread in the gallery, and newcomers at nine for supper, and a final relay after nine for the private chamber music at which Mondonville played.

One woman gave the impulse to all these festivities, a most rare and delightful woman. To beauty and the grace of beauty Madame de la Popelinière added wit, warmth of imagination and eloquence, sensitiveness and discernment,

an exquisite taste in all things literary or artistic, natural manners and simplicity of heart. The daughter of an actress (Dancourt), she had been the mistress of the financier, who had promised her marriage; and finding that he was gently but effectively evading his promise, she had confided her anxiety to Madame de Tencin. "Married you shall be, I will see to it myself," said Madame de Tencin, calling her coach; and off she drove to old Fleury to play on his religious scruples; with such effective results that, at the next farming of the revenues, Fleury laid down to la Popelinière as the first of his terms that he marry his mistress. With this burden off the shoulders of France, *la petite Dancourt* proved an admirable hostess. She redeemed her past by forgetting it, though she never played the upstart; she only strove to please and succeeded so well, was in fact so readily adopted by fashion, that soon, by no effort of her own, she was handed into a set where the financier could not follow, to suppers where he might not be bidden. He clutched her skirts, tried to wean her from connections he envied; for on seeing her so courted he felt his love reviving. But she shook off his claims as the whims of a despot, as a humiliating bondage; and before long came the revelation of her *liaison* with Richelieu. A separation followed. But a longer one was at hand; she was already stricken with the malady that was to carry her off and on which she seemed to lay a silencing hand, when she wrote to Richelieu. She died of a cancer.

Her death darkened the house of la Popelinière for an hour; but he soon married again, this time the pretty Mademoiselle de Mondran, whom he favored, maybe with reminiscent uxoriousness, for the fame of her talents. But all her talents, wit and art (she too was an actress) could not give the new mistress of the *salon* de la Popelinière the winning grace of her predecessor. People still came there in numbers; but they came only out of curiosity for such splendor and entertainment as all the host's horses and all the host's men could put together again.

CHAPTER III

THE PLEASURES OF SOCIETY

NOW LET US paint the life of a lady.

For a lady, in the eighteenth century, day dawns about eleven, no sooner. Until then "it is not yet light": the formula that locks her door. A ray of light gleams through the tall blind; on the bed at her feet a little lap-dog begins to yawn and bark; they give her no peace, so she stirs, puts by the curtain, opens her eyes on the dim room, mild yet with the warmth of the night, and rings. A scratch at the door: may the maid make the fire? Her mistress inquires about the weather, complains of a *frightful* night, dips into a cup of chocolate. Then, swinging her heels to the floor, she leaps out and seats herself on the bed, fondles the little dog with one hand and her shirt with the other, while her women slip on her skirt and her slippers. This much accomplished, she relaxes in their arms; they convey her to a magnificent *délassante*; and we have brought her as far as her mirror. In a woman's room the crowning glory is this table surmounted by a mirror, smothered in muslin like a cradle, decked with lace like an altar, and littered with trinkets and philtres, cosmetics and creams, perfumes and patches, vermilion and *rouge*, vegetal *rouge*, mineral *rouge*, chemical white, vein-blue, vinegar of Maille for wrinkles, and ribbons, and tresses, and plumes, a whole little charmed world of vanities redolent with an atmosphere of amber evaporating in a cloud of powder!—Experts have long since established its location: the dressing-table is always in a north room, so that the clear light, the steady white glare of a painter's attic, may fall on the lady as she dresses.

Now a maid eyes her mistress in the mirror, and coaxes

her into a hoop tightly indented at the waist, lacing her up the back with a little string that clings to the shirt and hitches it up. The lyre-shaped dial on the panel marks midday past; the door, ill-latched behind the screen, has yielded now to a charmer, who alights, rests an elbow on the table, drapes an arm on a chair, and watches her evolution with an air of assurance. The moment of the *grand lever* has come; and here are all the courtiers weaving around her wrapper. This is the hour of woman's reign. She is charming, she is chubby, in her snug little corset, in all her lovable beauty and admired disorder of the morning. And what a flutter about her! A marquis here, a cavalier there: cock-robins, wit-bibbers. Smothered in flattery, she replies, nods, smiles, bobbing restlessly, picking a bonnet, another, ducking the poised hand of the hairdresser, who waits with lurking comb to catch that little weathervane and twirl, if he may, a furtive curl. Here is where we dispatch our important affairs; here is where we receive a lover, scold him, fondle him, or dismiss him; here, amid this restless bibble-babble, where we write those delightful little missives of the morning, which flow so much more readily than those of the evening, where the heart peeps out at ease in undress, and out of its own comfort comforts another's. Meanwhile the two bells of our closet keep up a bewildering jingle-jangle: now one thing, now another, commissions, commands: flunkeys for flowers, flunkeys for playbills, flunkeydom afoot to learn when the *vis-à-vis* will be painted. The hawker comes in with the day's news, opens his wallet and whips out his indispensable pamphlets, which we shall be tempted to keep three days, three days, do you hear, before we make curl-papers of them. The physician congratulates Madame on her fine complexion, her dazzling health, "the full battery of her charms." And the Abbé, without whom no toilette is complete, some bright, sparkling little Abbé, bouncing on the chair a maid has placed for him, tells the latest story, hums the air of the day; or, leaping up, swings on his heel and clips patches as

he talks. The crowd comes and goes, shifts, veers, shuffles, chatters around the mirror; a man of talent strums a guitar, soon drowned in laughter; a mariner offers a parrot or an ape; and a little flower-vendor, favored the night before at the wicket of Vauxhall, tenders scents, sweetmeats, and Marseilles sprays. A milliner displays on a chair a silk paler than peach-blossom or dove's down; and to all these assaults, "What says the Abbé?" cries the sweet soul, half-wheeling, then whirling to her mirror and moistening over her eye a murderous patch, while the Abbé ogles through his *lorgnon* the silk and its seller.

A lovely hour, truly, this hour of the forenoon, which the eighteenth century names so poetically the *youth of the day!* Seductions seem to rise, beauty to be reborn, in the acclaim, the assiduity, the adoration of a Court. Around the mirror reigns a delightful activity, all the livelier for the nimble ministrations of maids about their mistress, the light labors of fleet little *soubrettes*. They are always about her, bobbing and running, coming and going, and trotting devoutly; raising a cloud of powder with the whirl of their skirts; kneeling to a slipper; or tugging stoutly the laces of a corset; or patting with an approving palm the mold of a headdress. What could be prettier? For they have a way with them. Fancy Philippine, Clairette, or Mutine, fancy them, cunning minxes, chirping darlings; the prettiest trick of a face, the most roguish eyes, the pertest foot, the whitest skin, the most fetching simper—all in all arrantly, utterly, artlessly arch! For your lady must have as pretty around her as she. Her maids must be fetching and taking. She would choose them, without envy, to match her beauty or remind her of her youth; and in their choice she displayed the taste and pride of the Duchesse de Grammont, who was renowned for her women. She might have favored Baudouin with the models of his ravishing abigails, so smart in the yet fresh frocks of their ladies, with a little lace butterfly on the head, a scarf of East Indies slack on the nipple, lace at the elbow, a hitched and flounced

skirt, and a bib o' lawn on the bosom: great gear, this, illustrious livery, which soon makes a maid forget that dun long-ago when she served in the city, in a bodice, poor goose, of striped swan-skin, calamander skirt, round cap of plain cambric, unpowdered hair, a homespun apron with red squares, and a gold cross on a black string at the throat! Poor Mutine, in those days she knew nothing. She could read, write, make a bed, a plain soup, wash the light linen, sew and mend; whereas now, Mutine, what attainments! She is a lady's maid, a hairdresser, seamstress, and milliner! She can do you an embroidery in small or square point, turn out a *blond*, trim a flounce or a furbelow. She is a godsend to My Lady, who treats her almost as a companion. And, rubbing elbows as she does with the imitable world, she carries backstairs, in cellar and pantry, its airs, its style, its cant didoes; so consummately indeed that she could easily, like Lisette, double for her mistress in the play of *Love at Cross-Purposes*. She takes on a certain touch of breeding, which is her dangerous charm for this society, which excites the infidelity of those husbands painted by Baudouin in his *Indiscreet Wife*, which inspires in the Comte de Seyecourt's son a mad passion for his mother's maid. The charms of these wenches are those of Marton ripening into the charms of Suzanne.

Yet, sly, smart, and alluring though they are, these girls often keep their virtue, or at least one virtue, that of loyalty, a merit very common in that age of light service, when singing and dancing were welcome in the lobby, when the Choiseuls gave a ball for their friends' servants. Linked with the names of Madame du Deffand, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and Mademoiselle Aissé, history, you will observe, has commemorated their three maids, who were attached to their fame as they were attached and, so to speak, confounded with their lives: Devreux, Bondet and that Sophie, who mourned her mistress in a convent.

Our lady dressed (often but for the first of three times a day) she runs to her music lesson, to learn the latest liling

air and pick out the accompaniment on the *clavecin*; or to her harp lesson, drawn by Moreau in his *Perfect Harmony*, which shows off the arm to such fine advantage, gives such pretty play to the wrist, and colors the face with a glow of enthusiasm much relished in the days of Madame de Genlis. Or, if we are in the days of Tronchin, when exercise is in fashion, the horse is ordered; a pretty little horse, with a maneful of ribbons and a tailful of buttons spanking in the galloping breeze. Followed by a single groom, the lady canters off to the Bois in the sleekest green satin, a coat gallooned with gold, and a pink skirt smartened with silver lace. This is the highstepping sport, while hygiene is in fashion. The Bois named Boulogne fidgets boskily at all these cavalcades, shivers at these amazons and cavaliers in mid-flight through its flustered vales. From the height of a horse a woman looks a thousandfold more willing, more alluring, more enterprising, more venturesome; the horse gives her a new magic, the charm of a semi-transformation, the notable magnetism of that male costume, in which Madame du Barry chose to be painted, chose to be graven; and thus, even thus, may we fancy the Flesh trying on Chérubin's uniform. Tailors and milliners compete in reviving the theatrical modes of the Amazons of the beginning of the century; they dream out a habit as frillless as may be, that shall be sheer enough to keep fancy free. And the Sex in the saddle, that the dust-ridden Bois turns to gape at in the year 1786, wears *item*: a triple-collared coat of puce-colored Shantung, with, *item*, little ivory studs down the front and on the lobes of the pockets; *item*, a similar skirt, edged with pink ribbon, which waves and flaps, hitches and threshes, over a low heel of pink doe-skin; *item*, a hat, of felt, color of canary quills, the fashionable shade, on which a tuft of green and white feathers nestles, nods, and flutters; while the hair, done in a tight club like a man's, or sometimes involved in a *flambeau d'amour* (a *love-torch*), beats cadence on the rider's back.

Before Tonchin (in those creeping days) the reading of

some longhand novel or long-winded pamphlet rapidly skimmed brought the lady through her day to dinner. Dinner over, the coach was called to take her driving: she would shop, she would visit. A visit was owing to the *Palais-Marchand* (*the Merchant's Dream*) and another to the milliner, to choose some new laces and the smartest of fluffs. Then she would appear at the *Chagrin de Turquie*, the *Ottoman's Loss*, the fashionable jewelry shop, to look over, or under, or forward to, such trinkets as might have been overlooked before, the latest aigrettes, the sunbursts and rings and dog-collars, the itching streams of those dredgable diamonds. Then away again, to scour the town, visit the latest sensation, a recent fire, a rising building, a tapestry for sale. And in the course of her ubiquitous trotting, she would drop a card at a dozen or more doors, look in at a score or more houses, to shop for a moment for a hug, a dig, or a compliment. Often she would fare forth in her *désobligeante*, "blue as the firmament, the zenith of azure," and when the day was declining, draw up at the Tuileries: this was the brilliant hour of the promenade, the ripe strutting hour, and to show oneself there sooner would have been something less than proper. Diamonds were blazing now down the main alley, the width of which four hoops sufficed to fill; and from end to end of those gardens, where Richelieu dragged his dying limbs for a last bow to the sun and sex of Paris, you lost count of all the obeisances rendered, in a kind of absent-minded drill, by great ladies to the men ambling by. Full dress and fuller skirts sauntered by, brushing the informal harness, the *déshabillés* of women who came there to parade "their nonchalance or ill-health"; the latter, wearing a work-basket at the waist, a little dog under the arm, their hair over their eyes, a mere thought of rouge on the cheek, and an open dress, walked slowly, flirting a flounced petticoat short enough to show a foot in a white slipper. At every step, in this veering throng, there were recognitions, glances, meetings, a passing word, an arm crooked and hooked to baffle a neighbor.

Sometimes, in strolling, an outing would occur on the spur of the moment. Patience: a turn or two about the great basin, till the Draw-Bridge is locked; then, after a supper at the *Switzer's*, the garden is yours for the evening.—Sometimes, too, the day would be wound up with a stag party, a supper at the *Swineherd's* or the *Britisher's Haven*; unless, of course, you preferred the *light nights* of the Cours la Reine, joyous and dazzling nights, gay with symphonies and illuminations and gaming, which introduced the dawn to the sparks and belles it overtook there.

But usually, on days not reserved for the Opera and the play, a lady might be persuaded to try one of the fairs, that brought a carnival stir into Paris and the outlying districts. A party would be made up to take her to the Fair of Bezons, or the Fair of Saint-Ovide, or the Fair of Saint-Laurent, or, best of all, the Fair of Saint-Germain, where she was dazzled, deafened and delighted by the innumerable lights, the noises of all sorts, the performances of all kinds: hawkers' cries, flattery and ballyhoo, the promises and performance of rope-dancers, jugglers, sleight-o'-hand artists, exhibitors of mechanical inventions, booths and new pamphlets, an hour of Babel, which she hurried off to forget at the Opéra-Comique.

Later all changes—amusements, promenades, the vogue of the fashionable shops and *rendez-vous*. *The Merchant's Dream* is no more: we shop at the Palais-Royal. It is not at the *Ottoman's Loss*, his very name has perished, but at the Descente du Pont Neuf, at the *Petit Dunkerque*, at the *Petit*, as it is known for short, that the fashionable loiterers alight to linger a couple of hours agreeably over some pretty futility. And just as the Palais-Marchand is deserted for the Palais-Royal, the Tuileries are abandoned for the boulevards, the new promenade in vogue, that has its fashionable day, Thursday, where you trail a crush of smart vehicles, diligences, *allemandes*, sleepers, *vis-à-vis*, *solis*, slug-o'-wheels, broughams, go-carts, *gondolas*, ape-buttocked berlines, hacks and *devils*. And you see mannered men and

women focusing one another with a *lorgnon*, from coach to coach, saluting as they lift and lower the window. The horses walk; pedestrians come to the coach-door to greet their friends, and flower-girls climb on the step to offer their sprays to the ladies. We stop, we step out; we sip an ice at the Café Gaussin or at the Café of Alexander the Conqueror; and from our little table we watch the world rolling by, a phantasmagoria of faces and fashions and liveries, rolling, rolling, rolling, in that din of the boulevards, which is made up of every conceivable sound: the distant rumble of parades, the *muttering* of the drinkers, the whistling of little sweet sellers, the strains of mountain bagpipes, the snapping of whips, the rattle of drums and the blare of trumpets.¹

The field of amusements of 1730, 1740 and 1750, has been greatly enlarged. Now women go after dinner, set back to three, to the sermons of Père Anselme. They attend lectures. They study the theriac process at the Botanical Gardens. They go to the watchmaker Furet where a negress wears the hour painted on her right eye, the minutes on her left. They go to Vincennes, which is no longer a prison, to see the room where the great Condé was confined, or to Greuze to admire his picture of Danaë. They go to a procession of three hundred and thirteen French slaves ransomed in Algiers, or to the hôtel Thelusson, which is building, or to hear the Abbé Mical's two talking heads articulate four phrases. They go for a portrait in profile, *writ freehand* by the calligrapher Bernard. They crowd to the inventory of the Marquise de Massiac, to see her two millions' worth of furniture, her store of stuffs and porcelains and jewels, unsurpassed in Paris. They pay for Mass for the success of a balloon ascension, and go to embrace the Robert brothers or Pilâtre du Rozier, before they take off. The taste for science, art, and industry, in entering society, has developed in woman a feverish and all-comprehensive curiosity, a longing to see and to know everything. Her

¹ *Les Portraits à la mode*, and *Les Remparts de Paris*, by Saint-Aubin.

fancy flits from idea to idea, from spectacle to spectacle, from employment to employment; her day is all activity, enthusiasm, fleeting projects, haphazard and whirling excitement, a whirligig that takes her to the four corners of Paris, on the heels of opinion, at the beck of the public prints, in the din of systems and theories, lectures and experiments, on the wind that blows, on the air that breathes, on the wings of the whim that skims her brow as it passes. A full day and futile, crammed with desires, aspirations, and resolutions, that seems to be quickened with the anticipation of earnest pleasures and philosophic, even economic, entertainments, an encyclopedic bargain-counter! A wag, who is not even a caricaturist, has sketched from life a typical day of one of these women, and he will show us its rush, its fever, its zigzags, its tergiversations, its headlong and helter-skelter course. The lady sets out; she stops for the Chevalier, whirls him away: he will take her to the course on Anatomy. On the way, she meets the Marquis, who must have her opinion on a matter most urgent, and she takes her to the milliner. Three doors from the milliner, the Baron's footman accosts them, while the coach is halted in the traffic: the Baron himself comes up to ask if they would be interested in an experiment in inflammable air. "I should like nothing better" says the lady . . . "That is, if there are no explosions. You promise? Step in, Baron." And the Baron calls to the coachman: "Rue de la Pepinière." They arrive. The lady: "I shall go on. It is late. I shall miss the lecture on statics. Chevalier, will you join us?" Near the Arsenal: "Germain, the address. Here it is, printed." The coach rolls along. But they spy some pretty parakeets; they must stop to see them, to chat with them; the dealer invites the ladies to step in and see a superb bird, an artist, he assures them, in impropriety, whose banter would attract too much of a crowd about the coach. "Oh, do let us get out, my dear. It will be sport for the Gods!" The bird is bought. A berline goes by. The lady calls to the man: "A word. Where to,

Count?"—"The printing-press for the blind."—"Marvelous! Delightful! Original! We will all go." But, on the way, she asks the Count if this is the same berline he had the day he took her to see Drouais' picture: and now nothing will do but the Marquise must see the picture. The blind will go on printing many a long day, but the picture may vanish overnight: "To Drouais!" The talk turns on painting, the Chevalier admits he does: whereupon the ladies plan a raid on his drawings to look over his flower pieces. "The Barrière Blanche!" The horses wheel and set off again. "Ah, Lud! speaking of flowers," says the Marquise. "That reminds me. Someone told me the great serpentine Thistle in the Royal Gardens is in bloom, and it flowers but once every thirty, forty, or even fifty years . . . If it wither to-morrow, we have missed it forever." And from the Botanical Gardens, they whip back, before they have reached them, to an architect of Parthenons, who lives in the rue des Marais, thence to a stucco-worker on the Boulevard de l'Opéra, thence to Reveillon, and from Reveillon to Dessenne's to pick up some pamphlets. At the end of which the Chevalier says to the Lady: "You were going, I believe, to the Lyceum . . ." The epitaph of the day.

No rest, no silence, perpetual movement, perpetual din, an unceasing self-dispersion: such is this life. A woman never needs an hour of retirement, a moment of solitude. And even in the rare hours, when the world fails her, when she is in danger of being left to her own resources, she must have, where she can see it and touch it, something living, voluble and stimulating. She must have, to keep her company and ward off loneliness, the frolic and racket of a household pet. It may be a monkey, the creature of predilection and affection of the eighteenth century, the chimera of the Rococo, an ape that sips chocolate with its mistress, while a parrot swings in the offing. Or, nimble and capricious, leaping like a phrase of Carraccioli, it may be a squirrel, scampering over the damask of a couch and

climbing the molding of a panel. The *salons* and bedrooms are thick with pretty grey Angora cats, which Madame de Mirepoix collects, which reign on her lotto table and push the pawns with their paws. What woman but has a dog? some dear, pesky little dog, that sleeps with her, that eats in her plate, that feeds on venison steak, pullets, and pheasant wings; a spaniel or pug-dog that reigns over pillow and cushion, a white wolfhound or some bitch of a lapdog recalled, when she is no more, as, "My poor dear dead Diane or Mitonette!" And what boundless care and affection, such as Marie Leczinka showed in rising a hundred times a night to fetch her royal puppy! Lionnais earned a château and grounds by bathing little dogs: he was *My Lord* in Burgundy. And the nurture of the creatures! Their mistresses seem to give these little quadrupeds something of themselves and of the nature of the time: Patie, Mademoiselle Aissé's dog, is always at the door to receive the Chevalier's people; Monsieur de Choiseul's dog, Chanteloup, follows his mistress to the convent; and the Princesse de Conti trains hers to bite her husband! Intelligence, caresses, immorality even, nothing you can name but these pretty little pets have it, pets sleek with style much as the Abbé Trublet was sleek with wit. The *Mercure* is filled with elegies inspired by their passing. In the days of their life they are celebrated, they have ancestry and a name: be it Filou, the King's dog; or Pouf, Madame d'Epinay's little dog, the scion of Thisbe and Sibeli, who all but broke up the relations of la Chevette and le Grandval! They are drawn, they are engraved. Cochin leaves to posterity Madame du Deffand's cats. Madame de Pompadour's dogs must be honored not merely by the printing-press but by the etcher's plate. Poets, artists, and painters sing them or paint them next to the name or the beauty of a woman; and the arch-type of their favor might well be that dog of la Gimblette, painted by Fragonard, modeled by Clodion, against the background of a fable by La Fontaine!

Still, do what she will, a woman has many an idle hour to contend with, unless she fills it with some physical, some almost mechanical, occupation. At home, by the hearth, where winter and weather or a spell of laziness confines her, or even in the *salon* where she is to sit a whole evening, she needs one of those employments, which must at all times occupy the eyes and hands of her sex: light labors, which require an attention bred of habit, not of reflection, pastimes which give countenance to her activity. In the eighteenth century we find a great ingenuity in the devising of these trifles; they spring up like a fad, spread like a plague, and vanish like a dream; on a whim they come, on a whim they go. Under the Regency the craze is for snipping. Prints of every description succumb to the shears, particularly those that are colored, and in her idleness a woman will cut up the loveliest, the oldest, the rarest—prints of a hundred pounds a-piece, to paste them on hat-boxes, varnish them and make them into screens, hangings and furniture, into tapestry and upholstery. The craze turns to a tiny reign of terror. Snip . . . snip . . . and Crébillon nips it neatly, when he has his Sultan Shah Baham name it the crowning glory of sublunar invention; nor does this grand art lack its genius and great man in the person of Huber, the famous Huber, the Watteau, the Callot, and the Paul Potter of snipping, free-hand, improvised snipping!

When this craze has served its day, comes an invasion in 1747 of puppets and puppetesses, little cardboard gesticulators, whose hands and legs move mortally on a string. Not a mantel now is without one, for the point of it is that to please a maid is to please her mother, a trick that these little people know, as they trip to the tune of:

A happy booby he would be,
Had he the art to please you,
A happy booby he would be,
With a jig to earn his fee.

Everywhere we find them nodding and daneing, these little Scaramouches, and Harlequins, and clowns, and shepherds and sheep-maids, a tiny tribe of song and play, puppets of all sorts and all prices, from the four-and-twenty penny puppet to the puppet of fifteen hundred pounds, which Madame la Duchesse de Chartres commissioned Boucher himself to design and paint.—The puppet craze merges, in 1749, into one of its offshoots, the vogue of mantels à la *Popelinière*, little mantelpieces with a movable panel: a plaything that suggests a scandal.—Some years later, in 1754, a pamphlet bears this curious date of publication: the year 42 of the Cups-and-Balls, the Eighth Puppet Year, the First Year of Turnips. From this we learn that the vogue of eup-and-ball, noted by Mademoiselle Aissé as preceding that of snipping, is already half a century old; and that the puppets have given way to a novelty. Collé will give us the key to this strange pastime, the idea of which may have been suggested to women by the custom of carrying a bouquet to the ball in a sort of small tin-plate bottle sheathed in green ribbons, to keep the flowers fresh in water. The game consisted, it seems, of scooping out a turnip and introducing into it a hyacinth bulb; and, setting the two plants in water, to watch them grow, rakishly involved, the hyacinth unfolding her buds and the turnip his leaves. This is the time, of course, when no woman considers her house complete without a Chinese cabinet, or a group of grotesques bought in the rue de la Roule. And might we not add that there is a kind of Asiaticism in her pleasures, her fashions, and her toys?

Amid all these freakish puerilities a pursuit is revived, which fashion approves and adopts, and which soon out-rials all other occupations, even that of needlework. This is the mode of knots; and a charming one it is.¹ It exercises a woman's hand in a light, listless task, crooking and stretching her little finger idly; it deploys her body on a

¹This fashion was merely revived; for as early as 1718 we find the Carmelite sisters offering the Regent's mother a *knottling-bag*.

chaise longue; it allows of an artful abandon, the charm of a sly indifference, an indolence which seems to be doing something, other than nothing. Not a woman now but walks with a pretty bobbin, one of those little spools that Martin, the enameler, makes into gems of art, "little arsenals of charm," as they are called, and which soon are to be had only in mother-of-pearl, in steel, or in gold. And where are knots not made? For appearance, at home, for practice, in your room, for propriety or patience or effect or confusion, in your boudoir. Knots for a visit, knots for the play; and there the ladies are so deep in their embroidered sacks and spools of ribbon, that they can only spare an occasional glance for the public and the play.

Then, about 1770, knots and *filets*, which seems to have been its successor, give way to a new whim. Now we *unravel*. We ravel, we unravel, we rip, we braid—galloons, shoulder-straps, any beadwork or braid that contains gold. We ravel and unravel for the love of it (ah, ladies, be mischief my witness, we know what that means!) and also for profit: we earn in this way a hundred *louis* a year. Profit thus prodding fashion, before long the craze outstrips gaming itself. Its excesses are such that a man venturing into a roomful of ravelers is assailed by their scissors and flees from their hands galloonless, breathless, beadless, laceless, in a social sense, naked and nameless. Comes a moment, then, when, to recall women to reason and discretion, the Duc d'Orléans resorts to a suit sewn with facings of false gold, of which he suffers himself to be stripped by the ladies of the *salon* of Villers-Cotterets and which they rush off, humming, to ravel with real gold. Rebuked in these abuses, women soon found in commerce any number of odds and ends to tangle and untangle. The factories wove them gold in all manner of playthings. On New Year's Day, in 1772, a shop hung out a sign, announcing as gifts of the season a wide variety of raveling toys in gold—spools at all prices, furniture, easy-chairs, *cabriolets*, screens, coffee sets, pigeons, pullets, ducks, water-

mills, and rope-dancers. For ten years or more the vogue of raveling toys survived; men gave to women and women to each other; these toys were the mementoes and little surprises of friendship. Madame du Deffand sent the Duchesse de la Vallière a basket full of raveling eggs, and to the Maréchale de Luxembourg a raveling stool, wrapped in these lines, which Grimm denies her the composition of to trace them to whom? to Monsieur Necker!

Heigho for raveling!
 No sport more without it.
 This labor in travailing
 Leaves boredom well flouted.
 For every inch that we rip
 A ribbon or gimcrack,
 We may slander and nip
 Our dear friend to his back.

Whether at home or in society, it is the great resource of all those hours, when the hands and mind are empty, the ever-present arm against idleness; and the chatter of women runs ever to this tune: "Dear heart, have you some thick gold?"—"Of course, of course, bobbin gold?"—"Nothing else will serve."—"Take a faggot. Here, you shall have a faggot. I do faggots."

In these last days of the century, when the day is over, to fill her evening a woman has all the houses and entertainments, of which we have given the list and description. There are also all the theaters of Paris, which she attends, not in a public box but in a private one,¹ in a box masked by a blind; a handy little corner, a mysterious miniature *salon*, at once frequented and secluded, where Lauzun and Madame de Stainville hold their *rendez-vous*. Here you come *en déshabillé* and bring your spaniel, your pillow, and your warming-pan. Here you escape the importunate, who waylay a woman before supper. Here you receive whom you please and hold a conversation fullblast, its

¹ Ah! And that reminds me now . . . !

babble and bursts broken only by a peep in your fan, the mirror of which shows you all who come and go. This charming innovation is a windfall for the French stage and leads to extensive alterations in the playhouse: a portion of the stalls is suppressed, to increase the number of these private boxes, each of which brings the Comédie a revenue of 4800 pounds a year.

But, better than all the playhouses, women have for their amusement the stages on which they themselves perform, the amateur theaters, the *théâtres de société*.

Amateur theatricals are a craze, a rage, in the second half of the eighteenth century. The itch to be acting spreads through all classes. It runs from the private apartments at Court to the dramatic clubs of the rue des Marais and the rue Popincourt. *Mimomania* reigns in the land, and fashionable mothers like Madame de Sabran give their children tutors like Larive and Mademoiselle Sainval. *Mimomania* breaks out in every crack and cranny of Paris. It runs riot through the country-places in the environs. In the town house a small theater is building, in the manor house a large one. The whole world is dreaming theater from one end of France to the other, and every mayor in his manse must have his boards and mummers. The amateur theater has its two great authors: Monsieur de Moissy, a stern satirist in distemper, and Carmontelle, a light lamponer in wash and wink. Life is unlivable for a great lady without a theater, a theater of her own; and when Madame de Guéménée takes to exile after the sovereign bankruptcy of the Guéménées, what is the first thing she does on reaching her destination? She calls in the decorators and has them set up a theater.

Count, if you can, all the stages swarming with the greatest names in France, where a peep or a part is a privilege so envied, stages that flourish especially during Lent and the dead season of the public playhouses. There is the Theater of Monsieur, where the historical dramas of Desfontaines are performed, and the pageant plays of Piis

and Barré; the Theater of the Temple, the theater of Monsieur de Conti, where Jean Jacques Rousseau mounts his opera of *The Nine Muses*, declared unactable by the whole Temple set; the theater at l'Île-Adam, where Arnaud's drama, the *Comte de Comminges*, sets all the fair spectators weeping; the theater of Madame de Montesson, where she performs in her own plays like a born actress and in the others with at least as much talent as Mademoiselle Doligny, Mademoiselle Arnould, and Madame Laruette; the theater of the Duchesse de Villeroy, where the actors of the Comédie-française give a preliminary private performance of *L'Honnête Criminel*; the theater of the Duc de Grammont in Clichy, where Durosy enacts a rôle in his tragedy of *Le Siège de Calais*, and the *demoiselles* Fauconnier appear to advantage; the theater of the Baron d'Esclapon, in the Faubourg Saint Germain, where a benefit is given for Molé, the six hundred tickets of which are eagerly distributed by ladies of the Court; the theater of the Duchesse de Mazarin at Chilly, where she offers *Mesdames* a performance of *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV*; the theater of Monsieur de Vaudreuil at Gennevilliers, where the first performance is given of the *Marriage of Figaro*; the theater of Monsieur le duc d'Ayen at Saint-Germain, where his daughter, the Comtesse de Tessé, and the Comte d'Ayen display such brilliant talents in a play by Lessing, translated by Monsieur Trudaine; the theater of Madame d'Ambli-mont; the theater of La Folie-Titon; Madame de Genlis' theater, in the Chaussée d'Antin, where her two daughters perform *La Petite Curieuse*, a piquant satire on Court morals; the theaters in Auteuil and Paris of the *demoiselles* Verrière, with latticed boxes for the illustriously invisible fair; Monsieur de Magnanville's theater at la Chevrette, the model of its kind, superior even to Madame de Montesson's in taste, splendor, equipment, settings, authors, actors, and actresses too; the theater that draws two hundred coaches three miles from Paris, the stage where the age applauds *Romeo and Juliet*, a play by the Chevalier de

Chastellux, "drawn from the British stage and adapted to our own," the stage where the Marquise de Gléon acts with such dignity, ease and nobility, and Mademoiselle Savalette does the *soubrettes* in a way to outshine Mademoiselle Dangerville!

For, of course, the great charm of these amateur theatricals lay in the fact that they allowed women at last to act. They offered their zealot the pleasure of rehearsals and the rapture of applause. They flushed her cheek with the *rouge* of the stage, which she wore so proudly and made only a show of shedding for supper, which followed the performance. They brought into her days the life-giving illusion of the play, the lie of the scene, the pleasures of the wings, and the intoxication which the enthusiasm of the public sends throbbing through heart and brain. What were six weeks of work to her? or six hours of dressing? or four and twenty hours of fasting? Was she not amply repaid for all annoyance, fatigue, or privation, when she heard, as she came off: "Ah, dear heart, divine! played like an angel! How do you do it? Amazing! . . . It is cruel, cruel: it is more than I can bear . . . She wrings your heart . . ." What happier device for satisfying all her tastes and vanities, for revealing all her charms, for exercising all her arts? The theater, for some, was a vocation; there were, in fact, not a few natural geniuses, great actresses and admirable singers among these amateur players. "More than ten of our ladies of quality," says the Prince de Ligne, "play and sing better than any in the playhouse." For others, the stage was a pastime; for some, a memorable occasion; but for all it was a craze, a craze and an enchantment only dispelled by the words, "Supper is served, ladies." Then the little actress hurries to table; for she has hardly eaten all day, to be sure of her *organ*. On the way a mirror warns her that her hair-pins are out; and as she stops to fix them, she remembers the mistakes she made and says to herself: "I should have read that line otherwise." Then she recalls that two people, who might do anything in the dark, whis-

pered in the third row. And suddenly the mask falls; once more she is woman, and the play ends in her jealousy of the talent, the lover, or the face of a rival.

When winter and Carnival came, the lady would end her evening usually at a masked ball and preferably at the Opera Rally.

The preparations for the Ball in the reign of Louis XV form the theme of a picture by Detroy.¹ With him we may enter the opulent apartment, where lighted brackets, writhing on the walls, flicker over the magnificently moulded frames of the mirrors. A fire sparkles in the grate, over flames of gilded bronze, which are, you see, fish-cold sirens periwigged *à la Maintenon*. Thick tapers of yellow wax burn on either side of the dressing-table. And, standing or seated, the sombre dominos, in amply padded mantles, are smiling and chatting, smartening their frocks and hitching their wide sleeves, braced with a large knot of ribbon. Their hands toy with heavy cardboard masks, tied with a pair of streamers; and, yonder, in a corner, the light tap of a fan tickles two eyes that are almost closing for the night. Here, her elbow jogged by one wide awake, a maid applies the last lick to the sleek hair of a lady, who is already dancing in fancy, as she draws over her shoulders and half-veiled throat a loose wrapper flowing over the opulent foliations of her brocade gown.—The hour strikes, and the scene shifts: we are come. No sooner do we meet someone “worth while” than fun is afoot, its first fire flashing out in that old and ever-new phrase, “I know you, fair mask!” A little liberty taken, a little apology rendered; reconnoiters pursued by excuses, excuses overtaken by advances; compliments rubbed in with a gesture . . . The dance is on. While two orchestras practice their calling, fingers and fans pursue theirs, and to a fugitive rustle of silk, women flute their: “A truce, sir, a truce to your fooling!” A constant ebb and flow fill the corridors. In the galleries what meetings bear watching! What recognitions,

¹ *Les Préparatifs du Bal*, painted by Detroy, engraved by Beauvarlet.

what mistakes! The room reels with confusion, everything dances and swims, ranks, orders, professions, great ladies and city-bred masks swelling to ape them! What sound was that? A Duchess unmasked by a Prince of the blood. What hand is here, where a mask sets its lips? The hand of the Queen of France, smacked by a fishwife, who scolds Marie-Antoinette gayly for mislaying her husband.

But the delight, the real delight of the Ball, is conversation. Under the mask the soul of the eighteenth century is at ease; false-face gives it life, frees its spirits, fires its irony. And the floor, under the great vault of the Opera, teems with leaping retorts and stinging sallies. Piron's epigram nudges Nivernois' song; and all the good wits of France, milling and bubbling as at the last course of supper, remind one that here, where they are chatting, the Regent mulled over Rabelais with Voltaire.

Amid these masked saturnalia of talk a woman pursues the charms of adventure, the delights of a random encounter, the light and blind banter of love. She catches her partners by the arm and sends them on their way with an armful of jealousy. The compliments of admirers unknown she breathes, unblushing. She overhears, in disguise, avowals and declarations. Words that barefaced she never would breathe she now lets fall; she encourages diffidence; renews broken bonds; knits a momentary romance; mislays her smile, as it were, on an aside, her heart on a bystander. And even if she is only fanning a fire to play with it, has she not in her hands the snuff-box, which ladies so willingly drop at the Opera Rout, to secure the visit, on the morrow, of some ready fellow who comes to return it?

The taste and tone of the world, guarded amid all this license of wit, an easy courting careful ever of form, preserve throughout the century a genuine delicacy even in the most fervid pleasures of the Carnival. A coarse joy, a mad turmoil, appear but once, for a moment, at the Opera, in the season of Pierrots, Punches, beggars, gout-feet, Chinamen, and flittermice, *the swallows of Lent's eve*; but all

these boisterous masks are soon sent packing where they belong, to the dancing-masters' balls and even lower, to the routs of La Courtille and the Grand-Salon. The vogue of Spanish costumes, which fills the floor with señoritas and duennas, is short-lived; and after a winter or two the dancers return to the costume of conversation and the mantle of intrigue; the domino reappears, announcing the return to old pleasures, and once more the Opera resounds with the hum, the laughter, the gayety of a *salon*. Toward the close of the century the black or brown hue of the domino palls; it is too sombre, too monotonous. And now the blazing lustres illumine leagues of light colors, soft colors, lilac, pink, white, linen gray, dandelion yellow, sulphur yellow, fresh and gay colors made lighter yet by gauze and artificial flowers. And Folly knows no lovelier veil to fling on a woman for her night of pleasure than one of those pale yellow dominos tied with pink ribbons, the facings and hood trimmed with a garland of roses doubled under a *falbala* of white gauze, and a black and shining mask with whiskers of pink taffeta.

The lady leaves her ball; but her night is not yet run. After a *medianoche*, a midnight supper, day is dawning or meaning to; and, to temper the vapors of the champagne, she goes to the Bridge of Neuilly, where good taste directs that she sip a ratafia over a macaroon—a thoroughly polite form of dawning.

Finally comes bed. I am writing, out of my privilege, by the light of a delicate and dainty drawing of Freudebourg's. Before a fireplace, where the clear flame is masked by a Beauvais screen; before a bedstead with two gold-studded steps; before a bed with tufted canopy and sheets puffed by a warming pan, stands our lady or what is left of her, disrobed by a maid. A letter has fluttered to her feet. Her head is tucked into a flounced bonnet, which holds her hair for the night; her shirt slips over her uncovered breast; and her furbelowed petticoat is about to follow it over the heels of her *mules*. The lights in the brackets are wink-

ing sleepily; the lady calls for her night light—and behind her, on a panel lit by a dying glow, a Cupid smiles like the god of her dreams and the angel of her night.

This squandering of life, this dissipation of society, this dizziness of the soul, the senses and the head, were not long in inducing in women a corresponding caprice of the heart. In that round of pleasures in which the wife was drawn further and further from her husband and grew daily more and more estranged from him, either because she nursed the resentment born of new grievances, or because she cooled naturally, involuntarily, she soon began to suffer from a vague uneasiness. At the bottom of her restless life she found only emptiness; and in that unsettled state where she lay fluctuating between caution, scruples, an affectionate disposition, nervous exhaustion, and the first temptations of her ideas, her unemployed heart sought refuge and relief in a woman, a friend, into whose choice there went as much vanity in those days as in the selection of a lover. Encouraged by the taste and example of the age, she flung herself on the friendship of some brilliant woman of fashion, and embraced it with all the frenzy, the ardor, the excessive enthusiasm of her sex. This was her first step toward love, what one might call her tottering practice and innocent sport. For in these relations there was more than the attentions and care exclusively reserved for one's family, more than the mere interest, the commonplace courtesy of the heart, such as a woman bestowed on a dozen acquaintances; there was a pervasive feeling, a vital illusion, a kind of passion. She would pledge her companion a life-long devotion, and prove it with sighs and embraces, whispered effusions and tiny transports! There was no leaving her, no living without her; every morning she must write her a letter. *My heart, my love, my queen:* thus, if at all, must you name her, with inclined head, in a voice limpid and languid. You wore her colors, nursed

her nerves, weighed her worries, whispered a thousand secrets in her ear; you went only to the suppers where both were bidden, and to invite you meant to have her. You sauntered through the *salons*, hand in hand, or held forth on a sofa in an attitude illustrating *Friendship: A Group*. All your talk was of the charms of friendship: you took pride in advertising your *sentimental intimacy*, and the portrait of your bewitching friend must always be dangling from your wrist-band.

Toward the close of the century, when the barrenness of heart of the time makes an effort to retrieve or rather to delude itself by an appeal to sentimentality, when the fashion is for affection, these friendships between women carry their display and excess to even greater lengths. Hymns of friendship and altars of friendship are all the rage. A woman's very headdress is designed for friendship, as a pedestal for it; and the factory of Sèvres manufactures in her honor groups of a *passionate sensibility*. The idiom of the day is filled with all sorts of stilted little subtleties, flabby little phrases, insipid little endearments. A woman says, speaking of another: "I have a *feeling* for her, she has an *appeal* for me . . . The nature of what I feel for her is so lively and so warm, that it is truly a *passion*. And moreover, there is such a *conformity* in our dispositions, such an *affinity* between our souls. . . ." Such is the tone, the phraseology and so to speak the intonation affected by this new friendship, so well adapted to the manners of the age; its obvious absurdity and extravagant generosity are mirrored for us in a little comedy on the sex, in which Juliette, the Marquise de Gemini's maid, opens the action by rehearsing the tradesman's items. "Eight hundred pounds for a desk! . . . A pretty sum for a letter to her dear Dorothy, her darling Viscountess; for, praise be where praise is due, My Lady has no better occupation than to dedicate all her days to her. She writes her regularly ten notes in as many hours! One large secretary, 300 pounds! One secret portfolio . . . One breakfast set of Sèvres, with

a double pattern of roses and myrtle, ten crowns! Two vases, with double design of pansies and *immortelles*: 400 pounds. A Group representing *The Confidences of Two Youthful Beings*, 120 pounds! . . . And items for hair-rings, hair-watches, hair-locks, hair-bracelets, hair-collars, hair-scentbags . . .”

For a moment, however, this furious friendship between women seemed to decline, like a waning fashion. The *bewitching friend* was dethroned for a few years by another confidant, a man-friend, to whom the young woman confided “her sooth secrets.”—Society at that time offered men of a neutral and very insignificant type, generally of discreet years and by no means enterprising, men in whom the union of a mild nature, a colorless character, an easy-going kindness, tended to dispel in the women who consorted with them all fear of being compromised by them. Modest, these spiritless souls knew their place; they confined their social ambition to a footing of friendly familiarity with some woman of the world, their rôle to the direction of her conquests; and the consideration they acquired in an office so untiring, in the background, behind a woman, often a third party to her heart, sufficed them. Discreet, assuming in their whole manner an appearance of reserve, aloof and indifferent to the general conversation, they took up their position in some chimney corner, where they stood warming their hands: but, the moment a skirt came their way sailing, she was hailed, she was seized, she was boarded for the evening, they made her their prize, sailed her to supper, hovered about her, busy, bustling, bailing her breath, murmuring mysteriously, drilling a long undertone in her ear, titbits, bated syllables, mere nothings, which they minced with an air of moment and calculated pauses. Wives, husbands and lovers let them spin undisturbed, with never a frown: they needed so little to make them happy! Besides, for a woman, what surer indulgence? These confessors of their secret thoughts had themselves so few sorry thoughts or shrouded them so well, that they seemed always

to believe the intrigues confided to them platonic passions. What wonder, with so much to recommend them, that they succeeded, like those two pontiffs of their tribe: the Marquis de Lusignan, alias *Thick Poll*, and the old Marquis d'Estrehan, known familiarly to all women as *The Old Man*, the supreme absolver of the sex, so completely in the general confidence, that he regarded as a breach of manners the failure of a woman to report to him unreservedly?

Not infrequently it chanced that this friendly dalliance with a man, this exchange of impassioned sentiments with a woman, diverting, without filling, the heart of a young matron, led her gently and imperceptibly toward the thought of graver indulgences. The bosom confidences of friendship, a rather cold and lifeless affair at best, when they were no longer a public performance in a *salon*, turned naturally on what most occupied her thoughts: the failings of the husband and the inconveniences of marriage. And the friends would fall into long discussions of love, and reflections, and confidences; and, vanity taking a hand, would dilate on the passions they inspired, all very innocently, at least on the part of the tyro, without a thought of mischief, without a hint of danger. But her coquetry was fired, her fancy roused, and her thoughts began to warm. From the words they exchanged, the images they evoked, the problems they raised, emerged a first hint of temptation, a mute craving to emulate, in the yet pure partner of these indulgences. There was nothing wrong in these playful and irresponsible chats; and yet, word by word, they probed a restless and unsettled mood. And when, as was usually the case, the friend was neither so young nor so unsophisticated as she, when she knew the world and was one of those women who undertook to form their younger sisters for it, it was no very lengthy labor to turn this little head and dispose it toward the love of some young blade just waiting the ripe hour to strike.

These dialogues between women, which advance matters so rapidly, may be overheard, through a keyhole, as it were,

in listening to Madame d'Epinaÿ with Mademoiselle d'Ette, the Flemish mistress of the Chevalier de Valory, whom Diderot paints as "a big bowl of milk and rose leaves, with breasts like pillows of down for a man's chin." It is one of those days, when the young woman, overcome with languor, uneasy and stifling with loneliness, is lying on her day-bed; her eyes are closed, her tears are welling; she is feigning sleep lest she break down; her heart is overflowing, on the point of flooding and bursting. At first she tries to blame her mood on her vapors, her despondency on an affliction she cannot account for. "Yes, an affliction of the heart, not the head," says Mademoiselle d'Ette, and with that word probes her to the quick, puts her finger and a clear light on everything Madame d'Epinaÿ shrank from avowing and investigating. She assures her, and proves to her, that she loves her husband no longer, that she will never love him again, that all she feels now is the revolt of a mortified passion. And the remedy is to love an object more worthy of her. Madame d'Epinaÿ exclaims hotly that "she could never love another." Then, this first recoil spent, she wonders if a man might be found, and where, to sacrifice himself for her and content himself with her friendship without insisting on her love as well. "But he shall be your lover—what else?" cries la d'Ette, thrusting the crude fact in the face of the novice and the truth of the matter into her illusions. Madame d'Epinaÿ is scandalized, she stammers that she would not misconduct herself for the world; and Mademoiselle d'Ette then develops the theory that only a bad choice or inconstancy on the part of the woman can blight her reputation. This dogma properly expounded, the novice has already progressed beyond principles: now her only concern is how to conceal an affair from the eyes of the world. Mademoiselle d'Ette, in reply, points to her own achievement, the lover with whom she lives, whom no one suspects, whom Madame d'Epinaÿ herself was in ignorance of. And as she sees her sister swaying under this well-aimed thrust, wavering non-

plussed, lost, and protesting that she will need time to accustom herself to such ideas: "Less than you think for," she replies. "I warrant you will soon find my principles quite easy, and you are made to appreciate them."

CHAPTER IV

LOVE

UP TO THE death of Louis XIV France had been sedulously spiritualizing love. It had made of it a passion in the abstract, a revelation to be devoutly adored as a religion. It had endowed it with a sacred speech, full of the refinements of formula proper to strict, ardent and actively practiced cults. It had dissimulated its material side in the immaterial nature of sentiment, the body of the god in his soul. Up to the eighteenth century love had been going about its business as if it hardly partook of the senses at all, as if it were, in men and women alike, an instinct of generosity and nobility, of courage and delicacy. Its code required the utmost proof and probity of passion, zeal and care, untiring perseverance, obeisance and oaths, gratitude and discretion. It had to be sued with prayers that implore and prostrations that praise; and it clothed its infirmities in so many seeming proprieties, its worst scandals in an air so impressive, that its shortcomings and even its shames seemed always to preserve a certain decency, a saving grace, almost an inveterate innocence. The age of chivalry had left to the enlightened civilization of France an ideal of love, originally heroic, and still, in the Golden Age, an ideal of breeding. But in the eighteenth century what has become of that ideal? In the days of Louis XV love is desire, and its ideal pleasure.

Pleasure—there is the word for the eighteenth century: its secret, its soul, its charm. Pleasure is the air that it breathes, that it feeds on, that gives it life. It inhales it, it expires it. Pleasure is its element, its atmosphere, its inspiration, its genius. It courses through its heart, its

brain, its veins. It lends glamour to its habits, its manners, its tastes. Pleasure bubbles from the lips of the time, leaps from its hand, trails from its secret soul and all its appearances. It hovers over this world and possesses it, is its muse, its genius, the nature of all its styles, the style of all its arts; and nothing survives from this age, nothing indeed endures from this era of woman, that pleasure has not conceived, nursed and conserved, like a relic of immortal grace, in the balm of the flesh.

And woman is its vessel. Pleasure invests and arrays her. It slips on her feet the slippers that voluptuously modulate her gait. It dusts her hair with the powder that relieves, like a cloud, the features of the face, the fire of the eyes, the light of the smile. It heightens her complexion, it lights her cheek with *rouge*. It inundates her arms with lacc. It proffers at the waist a promise, as it were, of the whole body; it unveils the throat, and women appear, not only at night in a *salon* but even by day on the street, in bland *décolletés*, parading the seduction of bare flesh and white skin which, in a city, soothe the eye like a ray of light or a flower.

Dress and every detail of dress are voluptuously ordered; its pattern and design are conceived for love, and its very reticences are made a temptation. Attire and trinkets are baptized with names that seem to whet and forerun the senses.

Thus preened for pleasure, woman finds pleasure on all sides, awaiting her. Its image nods and multiplies under her eyes everywhere, as in a gallery of mirrors. The Flesh smiles, sings, tempts, in all the mute and familiar objects of her room, in the ornaments of her environment, in the dim light of the alcove, the balm of the boudoir, the down of silks, the sleek *réveilleuses* of black satin, of which the canopy is a large mirror. It covers the panels with adventures invariably fortunate, designed seemingly to banish from her eyes all severity, even in painting. And, in an odor of amber embalmed, she must live, dream and wake

ever in a soft and veiled light, on languid couches apt to idleness and ease, on sofas and daybeds and *duchesses*, where her limbs yield so sweetly to an attitude of lassitude and negligence, where her skirt raised ever so slightly reveals the tip of a toe, the slope of an ankle. The evocation of the flesh is the concern of all who labor for woman, of all the luxuries designed for her delectation. Or follow her, when she leaves her lair, where everything is soft, beguiling, soothing, lulling, and mysterious: still the Flesh runs before in one of those vehicles so well contrived against diffidence, one of those *vis-à-vis*, where two faces meet, two breaths blend, and two feet fumble knee to knee.

Or into society. Conversations, compliments, innuendos, amenities, anecdotes, charades and the fashionable logographs of the hour: these we find veiling the cynicism of the smart world with its flatteries, fanning her assiduously with the breath of the day, wafting her those echoes of dalliance which wake an answering echo in her heart. The life of the day besieges her on all sides, stirs her senses incessantly. It tosses on her table and slips in her hand the books it dictates and applauds, the little leaflets of the byways, the profane tracts of her idle hours, the romances in which an Allegory skims a nice skum and dances over a loose dream, the tales of fay, gay with license and ribaldry, the picaresque studies, the erotic fantasies that rehearse, as it were, in their Rococo Orient, the carnival of the *Thousand and One Nights* to enliven the doldrums of a sultan of the *Parc aux Cerfs*. Too, it teases and woos her with verses that tickle her ear like a kiss of the Muse of Dorat on a scene-painted cheek. It is ever Phyllis, Phyllis that is assailed and who struggles and to so little avail . . . against glances and ardors and persuasions all too tender. "I can sing you that tune blindfold," says the Apollo of Marivaux. Insipid poetry; yet ever insidious, intoxicating! The *rondeaux* of Marot are touched up by Boucher, the idylls of Deshoulières are revived by Gentil Bernard, in verses where

the rhymes clink on ribbons pink, and the sense is one long cooing sigh!

Or music? an air? She sings? she plays? What air? This air. What text? This text. "*With his shafts the God of Cythera . . .*"; or "*By a kiss on the lips of pied Iris . . .*"; or "*Nay, nay, the God bids us love*" . . . songs that are everywhere sung, propped on every rack, dedicated to the Dauphine, and in which the Age finds so little to dismay it, that it welcomes from the lips of Marie-Antoinette the refrain:

*En blanc jupon, en blanc corset . . .*¹

The Flesh, the Flesh Universal, the Flesh that everything animate or inanimate exhales, that throbs through the music, that lurks in the words, that is the voice, the accent, the soul of this world, women meet more materially, incarnate and embodied, in the art of the time. Statues and paintings sollicit her eye by their teasing grace, by the enticing charm of their fancies. The chisel of the sculptor, the brush of the painter evoke, in marble and canvas, a veritable Olympus, a cloud of Cupids, a galaxy of divine dickerers. This is the Age in which the nude divine must be half-divined, and Art, robbing Beauty of modesty, reminds us of Fragonard's little Love in *The Rape of the Shirt*,² who makes away laughing with the maid's shift and her shame. What rollicking and sly little scenes! Mythological misdemeanors! And *Diffident Nymphs*! And *Mysterious Swings*! How many wittily immodest pages from the hand of a great master like Baudouin, a minor one like Queverdo, or Freudebourg, or Lavreince, or any of the thousand and one men, who knew so well the trick of unfrocking a bust by Collé in a miniature from Corregio! And the engraver too, with his needle nimble, sly, and roguish, is lurking to multiply these images in prints and engravings that

¹ *My petticoat is white, and white my stays.* From the *Choix de chansons mises en musique par M. de Laborde.* Paris. Delormel. 1773.

² *La Chemise Enlevée.*

are sold publicly, that make their way into the staidest homes and even into the rooms of young girls, where they set over their beds and their dreams these lewd suggestions, these charming immodesties, these couples enfolded in flowery fetters, these scenes of intimacy and betrayal and discovery, inscribed so often with a title that names Pleasure by its real name!

What resistance could a woman oppose to this seduction, which assailed her on all sides and addressed itself to all her senses at once? The Age beset her with temptations: did it leave her at least, to combat them, that last virtue of her sex, the integrity of her body?

No. The women of the eighteenth century, it must be admitted, had little of the modesty since acquired by the seemly sex. Modesty in those days was an unhonored, undeveloped virtue; it was still rudimentary, when it was not completely dissipated by the impressions, sensations and revelations to which the Age submitted women. The manners of the period set little store by it; they were characterized by a frankness and freedom, by a certain ingenuous coarseness, which valued decency, in all classes, very cheaply. As modesty bore no relation to the pleasures of society, women were not taught it, and they were hardly allowed to cherish its instinct. A growing girl was looked on as a child and allowed to play with men; she might even be laced up by them and attach to that familiarity no more importance than to a game. When she was full grown, a man (you may see him in a print by Cochin) might quite properly measure her in her shirt. As a married woman, she entertained in bed or at her *toilette*, while she dressed. There indecency was a charm and freedom frequently degenerated into license. The talk of the servants, the language of her ribald old parents, a language still warm with the vigor of Molière, a language forcible, vivid and devoid of all prudery, soon trained her ear to the blunt speech of that far from squeamish day. Her reading was as liberal: rumpish tales were always making the rounds, like

those *Maranzakiniana*, which a great lady dictated to de Grécourt; *La Pucelle* lay on every table, and the most self-respecting women neither denied having read it nor blushed to quote it. Suppose, nevertheless, that a woman still preserved some innate modesty of soul. Her husband, as we see him in the *Mémoires* of that day, was no man to leave it long intact. His attitude, on that subject, was extremely cavalierly; he trained his wife to all the compliances of a mistress; and, if he had dined well, he was not above offering his friends a private view of her slumbers and waking. Or suppose that she sought refuge in friendship. There she found venial confidences, the tell-tale secrets of experience, which destroyed all illusions, in the society of some notorious woman like Madame d'Arty. She would be taken to an amateur theater to hear a ribald *proverb*, some screaming success like *La Vérité dans le Vin* (*Truth in Wine*) or to one of those peppered prologues to la Guimard's dancing, which reputable women attended only in latticed boxes. She swallowed, perforce, all the "sweet outrages" of a fashionable supper, sat out all those playful ditties à la *Boufflers*, which were running the town at the end of the century. And, finally, to complete her defeat and efface the last trace of a virtue so painful, came philosophy. She would be swept off to supper at the house of some famous actress like Quinault, and there, in the orgy of words of a Duclos or a Saint-Lambert, amid the paradoxes popping through the champagne, in that fine frenzy of wit and eloquence, she would hear modesty disposed of as "A pretty virtue! It hangs by a button!"

And so, little by little, from year to year, such facilities of intercourse, such sensual incitements, such disrespect of men, such corruptions of society and wedlock, such precepts and principles of unbridled nature, uprooted in a woman the last vestiges of that innocence which, for a young girl, is the candor of her chastity, and for a married woman, the purity of her honor. When at last her thoughts turned to love, she had no longer any resistance to oppose to them;

in vain she summoned to her aid the revolt and disgust of her physical decency. Before long, in a home forsaken by her husband, what efforts would she not have to summon to save such little purity as might still remain to her, amid so many public examples of license, so many unions to which love or habit alone served as contract, so many recognized *liaisons* consecrated by public opinion: Madame Belot and the President de Meinières, Hénault and Madame du Deffand, d'Alembert and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, Madame de Marchais and Monsieur d'Angivilliers, etc.—even to Watelet and Madame Lecomte, whom no one was surprised to meet at the house of the straight-laced Madame Necker?

Everything is in league against woman—manners, habits, fashions, occasions, examples. Everything she sees or hears taints her will with yielding, her imagination with misgiving. Around her on all sides temptation rises, not merely the gross and material temptation of the senses, but another which menaces the pure and the fastidious, which strikes at her nobler faculties, at her sympathies, which moves her heart and wears it with the slow labor of tears it draws treacherously to her eyes.

There is one charm of love, redolent with youth and poetry, to which the eighteenth century submits its women, as if to offer them the ordeal most worthy of them. Here danger is no longer represented by a man, but by a child. Temptation lurks in innocence and youth; it plays at her feet; and she fondly imagines that in scolding it she is combating it, and only when she is smitten does she repel it; just as, in the ancient ode, the little fellow, wet and moaning, who knocks at the poet's door, revives by the fire and then, drawing his love-bow, fells his host to the heart.

The tears, the sorrow, and the prayers of a child: such is the burden of that lovely story of Madame de Choiseul and her little musician Louis. Louis so gentle, Louis so sensitive, Louis so every way appealing, who plays so sweetly on the *clavecin*. With Louis she plays, on Louis

she dotes: he's a toy; she feels for him the kind of *passionette* a woman feels for her dog. Then, as the little lad grows in grace, sweetness and feeling, a day comes when she must deny him the fondling for which he is now too old. Love on a diet: Louis, no joy? Louis, no appetite? Not a bite will he eat. Sadly he sits at the *clavecin*: so sadly that she lays her hand on his head with a soothing word—"My pretty boy!" At that he breaks down, bursts into tears, sobs, reproaches. Madame de Choiseul, Madame de Choiseul: she does not love him, she will not let him love her. Why? He weeps, waits, weeps, and waiting ever so patiently cries: "How can I show you I love you?" He tries to throw himself on her hand and bathe it in tears; but Madame de Choiseul takes to flight, to hide her distress from the little victim, who sues for her love as one sues for a mother's or a Queen's, kneeling and fondling the edge of her gown. And how is she to fight off her pity, all the next days? He has a fever, and, as he tells the Abbé Barthelémy, "his heart is failing." He sits and watches her devoutly; his eyes swim with tears; he leaves the room to hide them. He comes back, kisses her dress, and when she stops him with a glance: "What! Not even that?" Such feeling, such ardor, such artless audacity, a child's play of passion so natural and which is indeed passion, finally draw from Madame de Choiseul the cry of the age, the cry of all women: "Whoever you love, you do well to love." And maybe she writes more truly than she knows when she says: "My love for Louis is nearing the end; it must end with his trip to Paris, and I have set that for Easter. So, you see, I shall be very lonely, very idle."

But we meet, in the eighteenth century, side by side with little Louis, bigger lads, lads who tread closer on a husband's preserves. They are not yet men; but they will soon be. In them the last joyous laugh of boyhood covers the first sigh of manhood. They have the charm of the morning of life, the fire of youth, its sparkle, its eagerness, its recklessness. They are at an appetizing age, the age

when they obtain their first commission, when they are hankering for a pretty mistress and a handsome battle-horse. They are charming, heroic and silly; their skin is as white as a woman's; their uniform will soon see fire. They dally about the dressing-table, and the woman follows them already through batteries and squadrons, over the smoking breach, where they mount with the valor of tried grenadiers. And when they ride off, she says to herself—*He is leaving, leaving to fight, to die!* like Marmontel's Belise, listening to the farewells of her charming little soldier: "I love you, my fine cousin! Remember your little coz, for he will be faithful, he swears it. If he is killed, you will see him no more, but you shall have his watch and his ring . . ."

Lovers and lads, your dangerous charms are worth a poet's pen, and before the age is out, shining the buttons of Lindor's uniform with Louis' bright tears, Beaumarchais leaves you, lovers my lads, for everlasting memory, that roguish and artless figure, compact of all the witcheries of the child, the young girl, the urchin and the man—Chéru-bin! the demon of puberty of the eighteenth century!

This is one peril; but how many others for the virtue and honor of women in that profound transformation, which the eighteenth century has been working in the hearts of France: affection replaced by desire!

The eighteenth century, when it said, *I love you*, meant merely, *I desire you*. *To possess*, for a man, and *to capture* for a woman; there lay the whole sport and utmost goal of this new love, this fickle love, mutable, whimsical, insatiable, which the comedy of manners was to personify in that blustering, swaggering and triumphant Cupid snubbing the Love of yesteryear: "Fiddle-deedee! Your lovers, my lad, were ninnies! Ever sighing and moping and *ah-me-ing* and breathing their woes to patient Dame Echo! Echo! Pish! I have routed her, lad! To work, to work, a taste of your mettle, say I: show what you can do for me.

Time is precious; we must wing our man, and the next one. Who ever heard subject of mine cry, Ah, ah, I am dying? No, lad, no. My crew is as quick as can be. Faintness and fear and tender ordeals, all done away with . . . Pish, what rubbish! Stale tricks from the old days! . . . I sing no lullabies, I beat a tattoo; and my lads are so plaguey lively, they've no time to be tender; their eyes are flamepots: they attack, never sigh; nor never say, *By your leave* or *Be so good* . . . No, lad, they up and take; and that is as it should be!¹

The age has attained *reality*: it has restored the sway of the senses. It has done away with excesses, effusions, and affectation; and it boasts of it. Under this new dispensation, no mystery more, no moping, no dun mantles! With his lackeys clattering at the door, the lover wakes the quarter, where his lady dwells, and leaves his coach below to proclaim his good fortune. No secrecy now, no discretion: men are considerate only when they have their own skins to save. No great passions, no feeling, or you are a marked man. This new, free, bold, swashbuckling love, this *grenadier* love, as it is called, would make short work of you, if it caught you at the old tricks, loving disconsolately, or dropping into those *cant* terms with which men once wooed women! There is bite in the phrase, *respectful inclinations*, which stigmatizes those few unions sealed, after satisfaction, by sympathy, the duration of which scandalizes a society it disturbs! Respect is an out-and-out solecism. Respect for a woman? An insult to her charms: ridiculous in a man. Lead off with love at first sight; show what an impression she has produced; launch an avowal . . . Why not? Is it not a fact everywhere reiterated that a woman has only to be told three times that she is pretty, to thank you the first, believe you the second, and reward you the third? Any man will tell you that. The preliminaries thus disposed of, proprieties follow hard after, and love discovers the convenience of those connections so explicitly

¹ Marivaux, *La Réunion des Amours* 1731.

described by Chamfort as "the contact of two hides and the exchange of two impulses": connections thinly disguised by euphemism (a *passade*, a *fantaisie*, an *épreuve*); ties that are knit with no great inclination, unions of which the last day is foreseen on the first, and from which are banished all care, jealousy, annoyance, sorrow and responsibility, all thought of serious or lasting engagement. They start with a stray word, in a *salon* full of people, slipped in a woman's ear by some pretty fellow, who lightly takes leave to return, a leave lightly granted. The morrow brings a visit *en négligé*, *en polisson*, to the *toilette*; the lady is properly pleased and surprised by the compliments you see fit to turn on her beauty of the forenoon; then comes a quick probe. What choice has she made in her set? And at once a handful of banter, a pitiless pepper aimed at all the men she knows. "Well, well. So you are at liberty," you conclude, shifting back to her. "And what do you do with your liberty?" And you dwell on the necessity of losing it opportunely: "You must bestow your heart, or one day it will betray you." And you point out the advantage of finding a lover who will be guide, philosopher, and friend, a man practiced in all the ways of the world. Yourself, for instance; and you add with a fine carelessness: "I should be just what you want, were it not for my many engagements." And, veering for a moment to the lady you are with just now: "She persuaded me to show her some attentions, some heat, I may say. I could not with decency decline. I lent myself to her inclinations; and for greater renown to our little adventure, she took a pavilion; it was hardly worth the trouble for a month, yet I could give her no more; she furnished it herself, and very handsomely too." And you describe the supper you held there so very mysteriously, where you would infallibly have both been alone, had you not brought five friends with you and the lady five others with her. "I was amorous and ardent, I withdrew a full half-hour after our friends. She is sure of a vogue now." And you add that you can break

with her, without fear of reproaches. At this point you make some mention of your good points, your knowledge of life, the difference she will not fail to observe between you and other men; you boast of your delicacy in letting yourself be dismissed, out of consideration for female vanity; and relate, as the most beautiful act of your life, your confinement for three days to leave the lady the honor of the rupture. Bewildered by these many impertinences, the victim lets out, maybe, an outraged peep. "On my honor," you assure her, "on my honor, the more I think of it, the more I am convinced that for your own good you should have someone like myself." And, upon her declaring that if she had any intention of making a choice, she would want a lasting and reliable relation: "Ye don't say?" you put in, handsomely. "D'ye mean it, madam? If I thought that, I'd be capable of folly. Plague me now, if I wouldn't love you! The declaration is ill-turned, I grant you, but 'tis the first that ever I made, for till now I have been spared the advances. But oh! But ah! Age creeps on apace . . .!" At that, a smile from the lady, who melts and admits the man has some charm, some wit, an air about him, a noble and appealing air; but she feels the need of a more protracted acquaintance with his character, a more intimate persuasion of her heart; to which he replies gravely that, though he is the most popular fellow in France, and the weariest of his popularity, yet in consideration of an object that can hold him, he is willing to give her time to consider, say, four and twenty hours: "I think that fair, I never before gave so long."¹—And this engagement, which is hardly an exaggeration of those of the time, this engagement ends with these words from the lover: "My word, Madame! I had not thought matters at such a pass. We took to each other, it is true: you did me the honor of your approval, and I find you no less to my taste. I have acquainted you with my inclinations, you have informed me of yours and we have made no mention of lasting engage-

¹ *Contes Moraux de Marmontel*. 1765. Vol. I. *L'Heureux Divorce*.

ment. Had you proposed one, I should have asked nothing better; but I have regarded your favors as the effect of a fleeting and fortunate inspiration; and on that impression have acted.”¹

To this revolution in love women lent themselves almost without resistance. They soon foreswore their “heart-breaking profession” and all its prerogatives. No sooner had they set foot in the world and drawn its breath than they promptly forgot the ideals of their youth and the books to which they owed them, la Calprenède, the usual manual of fifteen year old girls, or novels like *Pharamond*, *Casandre*, and *Cléopâtre*, which freighted the pockets of the younger ones. Soon, in this age of indiscretion, the precepts of example and the banter of their more advanced friends banished all taste for heroic passions, all memory of their dilatory lengths, their abashed avowals, their noble trials, their transports provoked by the most innocent favors, the quintessence of their generosity and gallantry. They soon lost all romantic illusions, soon forgot those fond day-dreams, those fevers of the night, those sweet pangs of first love, which drew from them, the day that their darling, first spied in the convent parlor, failed to return, such dolorous sighs, and with the sighs an apostrophe to “sweet Pyramus,” and after the apostrophe a soliloquy, in which they referred to themselves as “ill-starred maidens!” Then would come a new flood of sighs, followed by further apostrophes to the Night, the bed where they lay, and the chamber that held their disprized lives: a whole happy romance performed to their pillows till the dawn of day. How could they preserve an imagination so simple or delight in such flights of fancy in a world that valued only the material and agreeable side of passion, that disclaimed all its greatness, its exertions, its sincere excesses and tiresome poetry? On every hand a woman finds irony overtaking and routing what she had regarded as the redeeming features of love, its honor, its mystery, its loftier virtues. In every voice, in

¹ *Œuvres de Marivaux*. Paris. 1830. Vol. IX. *Le Spectateur-français*.

every advocate, in all its unuttered sermons, the world is informing her, or giving her to understand, that heroic professions are but hollow words and great feelings great folly. Soon she finds herself blushing at the impulses of her heart, plucking the feathers from her brain on which she flew so far afield in the clouds of old romance; and, with shame at her elbow and derision at her heels, she rips off all prejudices, forgets all her schoolgirl nonsense; and when she meets her hero of old, who had once caused her such a flutter, she greets him with the most extravagant overtures, the most impertinent manner, and the laugh of a lady *parboiled*; interpreting in her whole bearing the words of Marivaux's young belle: "Welcome once more to my bonds: they will not bore you as before, and, I warrant, you will enjoy your entertainment."

When once a woman had outgrown the prejudices of youth, when she had attained this degree of sophistication, there were few scruples left to lose, and she was not far from that state of grace, when her hands might be joined and her heels too. Soon, at the promenade, the play or the *toilette*, the world would note a man every day more urgent, who would follow her to supper wherever she went; for, at her first affair, she might still be numbered among the pruders, who lingered a fortnight and might still fly their free flag at the end of a month. But, sooner or later, she would close with him. One night she would appear with him at the Opera, in an open box, the prescribed form for his official presentation to the world. After a short time, however, disillusionment set in; she had chosen unwisely; and now we see the lady dismiss the man much as we saw the man dismiss the woman. She would say to him what Madame d'Esparbès said to Lauzun, in his fledgling days: "Believe me, little coz, romance will never do, it will only make us laughed at. I took a great fancy to you, my dear lad; it is not my fault if you mistook it for a great passion, and persuaded yourself it was never to end. What can it matter to you, if my fancy be fled? or if I have conceived

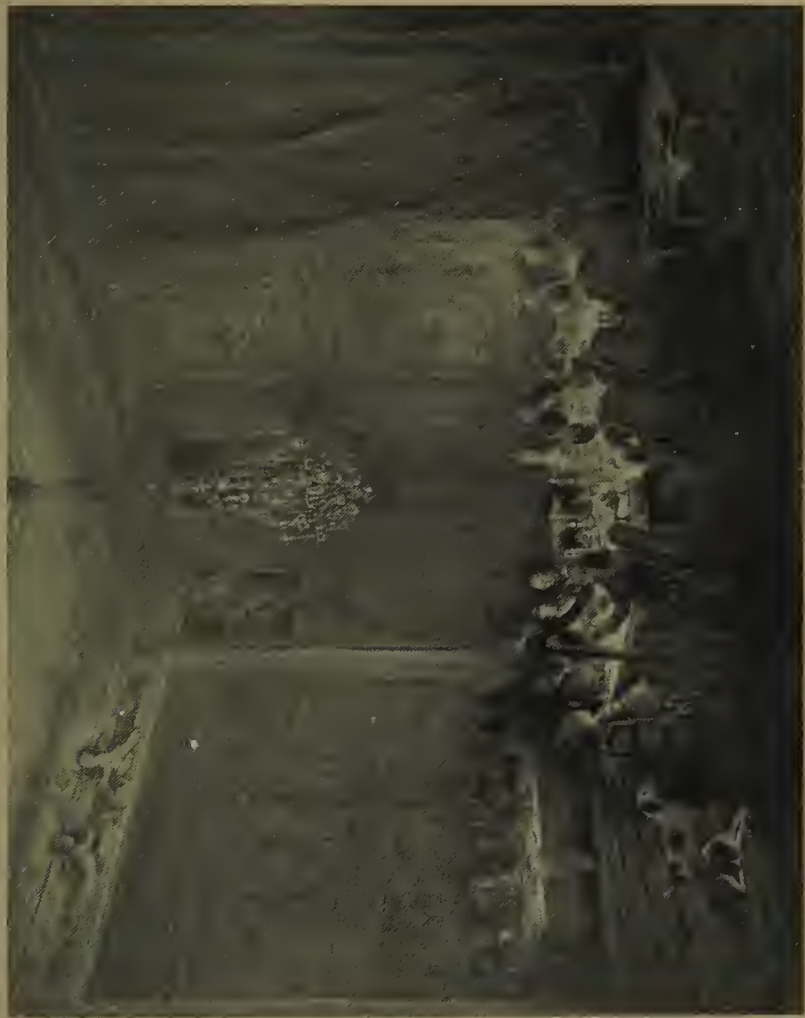


Photo Girardon
OLIVIER—Le Souper du Prince de Conti au Temple en 1766

a new one? or if I remain without a lover? You have many qualities pleasing to women, employ them for your advantage, and rest assured, the loss of one can always be repaired with the gain of another: so only shall you be happy and loved."

So they parted as they had met. They had been happy to *meet*; they were delighted to *part*. And now a career of adventure lay open to her. She plunged into it recklessly, headlong, careering from fall to fall, pursuing love in flings and fancies and adventures, in everything that could cheat love and excite and exhaust it; far more flattered to inspire desire than respect; now forsaking, now forsaken; and picking a lover as she picked a piece of furniture; so frankly indeed that we seem to surprise her secret in the reply of la Gaussin on being asked what she would do if she lost her lover: "Why, find me another." What else could be expected in a period, when the greatest and most amazing rarity was a *lover*, "a countrified fellow a-looking for love"? It is agreed that by the time she turns thirty, a woman "all shame has drained," and that she need only display a certain style in indecency, an easy grace in falling, and after the fall a tender and frank banter, which saves her from complete degradation. A little dignity, after total self-betrayal, is the only decency she will maintain in debauchery.

Soon, thanks to this freedom, women take on the dissolute tone of men. In the words of one of them, they want "to enjoy their discredit." The female *roué* has her little house too, which she purchases and furnishes with a porter, where everything is snug and secure against the day she repairs there to betray . . . even a lover.

To these habits the morals of the day are indulgent. They encourage women in the freedom of her adventures and the temerity of her misconduct by principles convenient and congenial to her instincts. From the ideas of the day, the reigning philosophy, the practice and principles in league against all forms of prejudice, out of the travail of that

great transformation which was rending and renewing society and every moral law, there emerges a theory, which aims to emancipate women from the narrowness of their sex and to widen their horizon. It sets up a new standard of honesty; it shifts the burden of her honor, as it were, by divorcing it entirely from her modesty, her merits, or her duties. Decency or decorum is rubbish: she may drop all such cant. And in place of the virtues formerly impressed on her mind and expected, not unnaturally, of her nature, the Age asks now merely, with modern modesty, that she be a good fellow.

Meanwhile men have been giving women a new notion of happiness, an ideal of unrestricted indulgence. They develop for her benefit a theory of love aptly rendered by the title of a book which describes it—*Never a Morrow*. According to this new doctrine, there are no real obligations, philosophically speaking, "other than those we contract with the world in opening our hearts to it and taking it occasionally into our confidence." But beyond that, no binding ties; at most a regret or two, the memory of which is a light and pleasant love-fee; and, whatever else, pleasure, pleasure, pleasure, without the delays and despotic obstacles of convention.

All these accommodating sophistries, these lewd lessons and abject apologia, filter little by little from the brain to the heart and relieve women of all let or hindrance of remorse, liberating, inciting and bewildering a sex already wooed and won by the inducements of those obliging theories, which fall from the highest circles, the most illustrious lips, the loftiest souls, most enlightened minds. And the love hailed by naturalism and materialism, the love practiced by H \acute{e} lvetius before his marriage to Mademoiselle de Ligneville, the love glorified by Buffon in his famous phrase, "There is nothing in love but the flesh,"—carnal love emerges at last, even in women, in its unabashed brutality.

Dimly, in the background of this new philosophy of love,

we descry, when we unravel the veils of the period, a naked god, fluttering and free, reveling in the shadows among his masked worshipers; we surprise certain mysteries, initiations, rites of secret confraternities under way in temples, where the statue of Love, looking over his shoulder, as in the fable of Dorat, points the way to the God of the Gardens. In this mysterious dusk we overhear certain words—passwords, a secret language, an amorous roll-call. From sect to sect, through the *anti-formalists*, sworn foes of form and ceremony, who meet once a month at an hour foretold, we may trace that strange freemasonry to its heart and seat, to its “Isle of Bliss.” There dwell its colony and Grand Order, the Order of Felicity, which borrows from the Navy its forms, its ceremonial, its metaphoric dictionary, its welcoming chants, its invocations of Saint Nicholas. *Master, Chief, Squadron Commander, Vice-Admiral*, are the ranks of its members and aspirants, who pledge themselves to wear, on admittance, an anchor lodged on the heart, to contribute to the best of their ability to the happiness and pleasure of all their brother and sister cavaliers, to let themselves be led to the Isle of Bliss and to lead other mariners to it in turn, when they have found the way. More secretive, more jealous of their high mysteries and solemn oath, which they never reveal to their practicing members, shifting their seat and frequently dispersing their sect to purify it, the *Aphrodites*, who baptize their men with names borrowed from the mineral kingdom and their women with names from the vegetal, pass from our ken with their secret untold. But there is another society “of Bliss,” a society named descriptively the society of *the Moment*, which has left us, in manuscript, its regulations, its marks of recognition, its roll of membership and the names of the happy, its code, its constitution; there we see clearly how far fashion had pushed, even in the highest society, the disregard and neglect of all restraint such as courtship had hitherto preserved in love-making, to assure it at least some breeding, some charm, some humanity!

At the opposite pole from these ideas we find, in protest against their cynical leagues, a sect which proposed to ban all suggestion of desire in love. By a natural reaction, these excesses of carnal love and dissolute brutality turned a little band of delicate souls, whose natures were, if not lofty, at least fastidious, toward platonic love. Lurking in the propitious shadows of the *salons*, a little band of men and women pursued quietly a sentimental undertone, and returned to the delights of affection and sympathy, almost indeed to the *Carte du Tendre*. They drew up an *Order of Perseverance* and planned a temple with three shrines: one to Honor, one to Friendship, and one to Humanity. We are reminded of the attempt, early in the century (when its first ravages were breaking out) of the Court of Seals to restore the *Astrée*, when it launched over the supper-tables of the Palais-Royal the appeal of its love-mottoes and the foundation of the romantic order of *The Honey Fly*.

Heart's Ease is the name of this new order, in which some few names of note enroll. At long intervals, here and there, we find some loftily inclined natures, who flaunt a conspicuous delicacy of taste, manners, and morals, and who preserve, with the polite traditions of the Golden Age, a last bloom of chivalric love. And to merit the veneration of these pure passions, we see women forswearing their *rouge*; palely they lie, these ladies, on languid couches, waiting, with melting eyes, to be devoutly adored and courted from afar. Madame de Gourgues is the type: her indolent attitudes and languishing grace strike the pose for the whole confraternity. And her counterpart is at hand—in the Chevalier de Jaucourt, a prepossessing fellow with black eyes, pale skin, and disheveled, unpowdered hair: the perfect hero of a sentimental novel, made to be a woman's dream, primed with ghost stories, and baptized so delightfully with a name, which is a revelation—*Moonshine*. He is the master of the manner; and he has but one rival, Monsieur de Guines, who makes a proud show, at once ardent

and discreet, of his spiritual affinity for Madame de Montesson.—A meager little band, though, that influenced the rehabilitation of love as a mere passing fashion. We can not even vouch for its sincerity (the sincerity of a fad!), for many doubts occur, regarding this meritorious essay in Platonism at the height of the eighteenth century and the conviction of its adepts, when we note how the last of these unions ended. Madame de Montesson became the wife of the Duc d'Orléans, and through her influence Monsieur de Guines, flatly foregoing his passion, walked off with an embassy.

If we wish, however, to see the love cult of the eighteenth century in its true proportions; if, that is, we look for its recurring features, its normal and habitual traits, apart from excess and exception, apart from that pamphleteering spirit of satire which colors all the writings of the time and always labors the truth a little, it is not in such extravagances and infirmities that we shall find its true colors and average character. Love in this age lies neither in the hazards of a casual encounter, nor in such engagements as sustain it on a diet of pure sentiment. It lies, rather, in a certain facility in women. Women are stripped and disarmed; yet they still have the right of choice—if not the search-warrant. They enter recklessly into a union, which offers no promise of permanence; but they want to be swept into it by, at least, an *inclination*, a moment of passion, *un gout*.

The nature of love in this period may be likened to that strange state, in which virtue seems to experience, as Fontenelle said of life as he lay dying, a great impossibility of being; it is a natural surrender, apathy, weakness; we hear the accent of that avowal in this admission by a woman: "Do you blame me? There he was; and there was I; we were living in a sort of solitude; meeting every day and meeting no one else. . . ."

Love in the eighteenth century is made to the measure and in the image of its women; it is no larger, no deeper, no higher. And their measurements? Study them, examine them: deduce their brain and capacity from their body and temperament; and what do we find? Wherein does the woman of the eighteenth century differ from the woman of to-day? She is the typical Parisian, the Parisian reared in an exciting environment, which precipitates puberty, matures the body prematurely, and produces a nervous and debilitated constitution, denied the robust health of the senses. So far, infirm. Now pass to her heart. Its instincts and impulses are equally without vigor, passion, or life. She knows no irresistible need of affection and self-expression, no breath-taking summons to serve and devote herself to love ineluctable: she has merely a nice, compassionate little heart, capable of pity when it pleases, responsive to mild stimulations, lachrymose emotions, sentimental ideals, melancholy moods that move her like a sad and remote music. Her heart is far more inclined to reverie than passion, to deliberation than love. That remark was made by an observer who lived with her closely. "The women of our time love not with the heart, but with the head," said Galiani. And he spoke truly. Love, throughout this period, shows all the symptoms of a licentious curiosity, a passion of the mind. For women it is the pursuit of an imaginary pleasure or an imagined happiness. The need of the one, the illusion of the other, fret and mislead her forever. Instead of the satisfaction of the senses, the finality of the flesh, love fills her with longings, impels her from adventure to adventure, solicits her, at each downward step, with the lure of a spiritual forfeit, an ideal falsehood, the unattainable delights of a dream of debauchery.

Thus it is that the greatest scandals, the most flagrant infamies of the period, are in effect errors of the head, errors characterized by a motive far from sensual—by vanity. Women often make shift to resist a youth like Chéru-

bin or a man, whose person they appreciate. They may even be proof against all the seductions to which they are normally susceptible in the opposite sex, beauty, wit, strength, grace, intimacy and habit. But there is one appeal against which they hardly struggle, one fascination they are incapable of fleeing: the fashionable idol. No sooner does he appear than they rush to embrace him; they fling themselves at his feet; they hardly leave him time, or give him the trouble, of taking their hearts—so true is it that in these women love has all the meanness of vanity! No sooner does the conquering male appear than the vain female embraces his feet; she runs before him, smoothing his way with her love, her influence, her intrigues; she opens the Court to him. She is proud to serve him, and she expects no thanks. She is as vain of being forsaken as of being seduced by him. She will go so far as to accept as a declaration of love the circular letter sent by Letorière one day to all the ladies, whose beds he was waiting to grace. We have come a great way from the days of those delicate and courtly love-notes, which made the fortune of the mother of Moncrif, whose feeling and refined pen they employed. Let him deign but to take, this irresistible lover, this conquering male; and at his feet, imploring, he will find the purest, the most virtuous, the very women who until then had preserved the peace of their honor and their hearts against all attack. Nay. A wink, and Madame de Tourvel herself will be lost!

If his name happens to be Richelieu, he moves through the period in a triumphant progress like a god. He is the lord of women, apothecized as an idol; at his oncoming honor melts into helpless tears. Thanks to that name, there is honor in the shame he bestows. Women pursue scandal in his wake; they emulate the glory of being tarnished on his arm. Everyone yields to him, virtue and charm, princess and duchess. The cult of youth and beauty at the courts of the Regent and of Louis XV opens all doors to him, and its celebrants run before him like wantons.

The jealousy of women fights over him, as does the wrath of men: he is the occasion of an exchange of pistol shots in the Bois de Boulogne between Madame de Polignac and the Marquise de Nesle. He has mistresses whose loyalty stifles their jealousy and serves his betrayals, mistresses whose patience no insult or mortification can exhaust. Those whom he insults kiss his hand, those he dismisses come crawling back. He loses all track of their portraits, their tresses, their lockets, their rings; he can no longer tell them apart; they lie helter-skelter in his memory as their mementoes lie in his desk. Every day he wakes to new tributes, rises to the prayers of new pleaders. He tosses them aside unopened, with a line scrawled like a scar across the face of the envelope—*Letters unread: no time*. At his death his executors find, still unbroken, five letters of assignation from five great ladies, each imploring an hour of his night. Or, if he deigns to open them, he skims them with a glance and drops, with a yawn, those abject and burning lines like a Minister an importunate petition.

And if not Richelieu, it will be another. It matters little where the man comes from or what his origin; women care nothing for his rank, his birth, or even his calling: fashion commends him and his conquest honors them. He may be an actor, a singer, he may still have the paint of the stage on his cheeks; if he is *the thing*, if he is a man, he is a master! The greatest ladies and the youngest bid for him, pursue him, entreat him, and lay at his feet their advances, their thanks, their grateful submission. For his sake they will suffer imprisonment, and well-nigh death, as the Comtesse de Stainville did for Clairval. They dispute him, like those two Marquises who fought publicly for Michu in a box at the *Comédie-italienne*. They reproach him with the shameless rage of a famous Countess, who shrieked from the housetops, "Jilted! Jilted"; or with the blind determination and gentle obstinacy of the sister-in-law of Madame d'Épinay, Madame de Jully. What an admission she makes, when, upon asking Madame d'Épinay to favor her

affair with Jelyotte, her sister-in-law exclaims: "Are you mad? An actor from the Opera, a public figure, who can not be decently accounted your friend?"—"Gently, my dear, gently, I pray you," replied Madame de Jully. "I told you I love him. I did not ask you if I did well to love him."

But this is not all. The profanation of scandal was not enough. It was the achievement of the eighteenth century to have introduced into love, of which it had already made a battle of the sexes, the blasphemy, the hypocrisy, the sacrilegious thrills of a piece of play-acting. Not until love had become a tactic and passion an art, affection a snare and lust itself a disguise, could it be sure of having stifled, under the crowning sneer of parody, what little conscience and truth remained in its heart.

It was in this contest and game of love, on this stage of passion performing to its own plaudits, that the Age revealed its deepest qualities, its most secret resources, and a kind of genius of duplicity entirely unexpected in French character. How many great diplomats and nameless statesmen, abler than Dubois, subtler than Bernis, in that little band of men, whose lifelong ambition was the betrayal of women! What study, what science, what thought, what perseverance! What great histrionic art! What an art of disguise (of which *Faublas* contains the record) transforming Monsieur de Custine so wholly, that, dressed as a *coiffeuse*, he is able to cut a mesh of his mistress's hair, unrecognized! What plots worthy of a strategist or a novelist! Not one of these men attacks a woman until he has laid a plan, as he calls it, until he has spent a night stalking and reconnoitering her breastworks, like a writer evolving a plot. And, the assault once launched, they conduct it to the end like the amazing actors they are, like those books of the time, in which there is not a single sentiment that is not feigned. Every step, every effect, is foreseen; if pathos

is the cue, they determine beforehand the moment at which to swoon. They can pass, by the finest gradations, from respect to affection, from despondency to frenzy. They excel in concealing a smile in a sigh, in writing what they never dream of feeling, in coldly breathing fire into their phrases, in fumbling them with the most convincing effect of passion. They manage a glance that seems a betrayal, gestures and inflexions they have rehearsed in their closets. Their voice is a lover's, their cries are those of a broken heart, so skillful are they in simulating emotion, so closely does the voice resemble the soul, so completely has it acquired the knack of a factitious sensibility! "Omit nothing" is the rule of one of them. And truly they overlook nothing that can rouse her feelings, capture her interest, thrill the tenderest chords of her nature, and suborn and betray her. They enlist in their schemes and forecasts even such elements as the weather and the temperature: they compute the lassitude of her senses on a mild day of rain, the enervation and gloom of a gray evening. They are painstaking, precise, and diligent. They mean to shine, from the first word to the last, not only in her eyes but in their own. They want to please and applaud themselves, whatever the outcome, and they are prouder to carry from the performance their own approbation than hers; for, in time, these artists in seduction introduce into their play the vanity of a mummer. They do more: they bring to their work the critical instinct of a true actor. And to complete the effect, to utterly wring and distress the fair hearer, some go so far as to paint on their faces the lie of their whole person; they paint, they make up, they unpowder their hair, they pale themselves by stinting their wine. There are even those who, for a final appointment, smear despair on their face as one smears *rouge*; with a solution of Arabic gum they concoct on their cheeks the traces of their undried tears!

Others go straight to the point. The day that they realize they can succeed without love, they decide that they may also, in urgent cases, dispense with wooing. That puts an

end to all pretense of respect or honor; and now love is no longer ashamed of violence. Brutality and insolence become approved methods of courting; their employment is no mark of infamy. Their success even gives a kind of glory. Women find these coarse insults flattering; they take a certain cowed pleasure in this disgusting method of seduction. How many rapes are forgiven! Often a lasting tie is formed in this way, after a struggle in a coach, driven by some priceless fellow, who walks his horses and stuffs his ears and knows the longest way round as well as his masters do the shortest! "A mishap, an accident: such things will happen, they happen every day; forget it." This is all that the world says, on the morrow of one of these exploits. The school of violence has its adepts in the highest circles. One day it noses the Queen of France; and for one martyr, one Lauzun who is disgraced, count, in the confessions of the time, all the successful heroes of such exploits! Adding triumph to triumph and whetting its delicate indecency on its cynical scruples, this brutal love-making ends by inventing principles, a kind of philosophy, a code of excuses. It works out an ingenious theory of *seizing the moment*; and brilliant talents were found to prove that a bold lover showed a woman more respect than a timid one, treated her indeed with more true consideration, in sparing her the long ordeal of daily concessions and the shame of feeling that she was failing and of rueing it . . . vainly.

But there is another order of victories generally esteemed superior and particularly prized by men: the triumph by wit. Only thus do the past-masters of seduction, the sophisticates, find an ever-new stimulation and the pleasure of a genuine conquest of women. Cloyed by custom and success with violence, with triumphs that affect only the senses, they propose to reach her heart without appealing to it, and to subdue her without so much as mentioning sentiment! It is her head, her head alone, that they are after; and that they will ply and turn with temptations and desires, which act like a narcotic and end in a sudden, almost

involuntary collapse. For these men a flirtation is a contest, a contest without violence but also without quarter, from which the woman must emerge mortified by their intelligence, cowed and beaten by their superior depravity, not enamored but overcome. Give them an occasion to engage her, give them an hour to uncouple their tongues: as coolly as a hunter and as unerringly as a captain they pursue, attack, push her, beat her from phrase to phrase, from word to word, dislodge her from defense to defense, close in and worry her, run her down, seize and brandish her at last, hot in hand, at the end of the conversation, with beating heart, breathless as a bird caught on the wing! It is an almost appalling sight to see one of these men capture a coquette or a novice by sheer banter and impudence. Watch them: what amazing maneuvers! Listen to them. Never has an insolent idea been so engagingly advanced in the tact of its terms. Between what they say and what they think, they vouchsafe merely, out of regard for the victim, an involved flourish or two, a thin veil like those delicate wrappers of taffeta, in which men visit women in their chambers, in the country.

Apologies for disturbing her (this is how it begins) in her many appointments; a faint denial, finger on lips, of your reputed adventures; followed by a nonplussed avowal, finger on forehead, for you are confused; then a first prick, her ear up at the mention of a lady not unknown to you, nor to her; her eye down at the *cut* of the creature, whom you recall inch by inch; ply your advantage, be abundantly indiscreet, lest by your silence you pledge yourself to discretion hereafter; then a slick *passado* on the wisdom of forgetting; whip in the name of a woman, who had to remind you recently you once loved her tenderly; play her out, hand on hips; abound now in professions of respect, just when you are least respectful; then a feint, profess surprise at the lovers the world lends the lady, flash your peepight over all their infirmities; drill a distinction between loving and keeping a woman; pass to the benefits of modern philos-

ophy, a little neat footwork on the boon of having done away with prudery and affectation; flourish the advantage of this convenient modern custom of pairing as you please, parting when you will, and repeating, without ever a rupture; prove how much love has gained by losing its virtuous airs, by refusing to overrate itself, by being merely this fleeting whim which the age calls a *fancy*; and by the way in which you say all these things, by the fine carelessness with which you toss them off, and the superior smile you distribute over all these illusions, confuse and confound her so to the quick, that with a little assurance she collapses—this is the formula, the great art and the grand manner of seduction, a science truly flattering to the pride of the male; for, in this expeditious fence, he has resorted to no arms but his wits. If now he maintains his irony to the end, if even in his gratitude he remembers to be insolent, he will be rewarded by the woman's cry of shame and confusion—"But tell me, tell me at least, that you love me!"—so immaculate has he kept himself from all feeling. And even that balm which she begs in shame he denies her, guying her gayly on a qualm of conscience so inopportune, on the absurdity, for a woman of her wit, of still nursing such cant, and the indecency of expecting, at the point they have now reached, an assurance which he, for his part, had no need of making to come thus far. To deny love, or what passes for love, its last illusion and final sanctity is the supreme thrill of vanity for the men of that day.

Here we begin to plumb the dregs of love in the eighteenth century and to see the gall of its gallantries, the rankness they secrete. Already in this brazen good faith in depravity, in this refusal to exonerate a woman in her own eyes, there is a malign thrill perilously close to the culminating instincts of corruption. Down this easy slope of irony and banter Love soon reaches the point where it makes a point and a pleasure of malignity; and the malig-

nity of the age, so delicate, so pointed, so mannerly, creeps toward the very heart of love. The fop in his vanity is no longer satisfied with the ruin of a reputation; he must be able to write his light-hearted *Finis* with a flourishing "Aye, aye, sir! Through, most thoroughly through, you may say. I made her worship my parts, if you must know, and serve my pleasure; and I left her with her vanity well mortified." The really brilliant thing is to revive an amour, impishly, before dealing it the death-blow. A spring of mischievous appetites has been tapped in the coxcomb, that leads him to seek not merely dishonor but suffering. He plays with his victim, taunts her to the quick, leaves a scar for a kiss, bleeds her to the last drop of what little remorse remains to her frailty. No sooner has he infatuated her—*wrought her*, in the loose lingo of the day, *to a caramel crush (sou-tirée au caramel)*—than he shakes his dripping finger at her in a scene of feigned jealousy, which sends him, on her denial, into a rage and out of the door. Heartless sports, that reveal clearly, under their sickening grace, the cruelty of the Age and its moral depravity! What could be neater than to mention the lover she has had, or still has, at the very point when she has most utterly forgotten him? to recall her duties, when she is past recalling them? to see her brows knit, her face grow overcast, her eyes swim with tears, at the vision you evoke of the man who worships her and whom she is betraying? Or else, if she is mourning a lover, the knack lies, now that you have ousted that haunting sorrow, in raising his shade, in lamenting him, in saying with a sense of ineffable affliction, "What a loss!" and exasperating the poor baffled soul with his memory! Then and then only has a man earned, after such triumphs, that flattering tribute—"Upon my soul, sir, you are monstrous cruel!"—a tribute it would be almost indecent not to have provoked before abandoning a conquest.

More and more, as the Age ripens, more and more, as it realizes its nature, fathoms its passions, refines its lusts, and hardens and rots in its insensibility and cerebral sen-

suality, does it seek grimly in these proclivities the satisfaction of some indefinable depravity of its senses, which finds zest only in malice. Malice, once its relish, now becomes the very essence of love. Love's *treasons* fade, and its *villainy* blooms. Into the relations of the sexes there enters something like a pitiless game of policy, a deliberate plan of destruction. Seduction becomes an art equivalent in treachery, faithlessness and cruelty, to that of tyranny. A genuine *Machiavelism* invades love-making, dominates and directs it. Now it is that Laclos writes from life the *Liaisons dangereuses*, that admirable and execrable book, which is to the amorous code of France in the eighteenth century what the treatise of *The Prince* was to the political code of Italy in the sixteenth.

In those turgid hours which forerun the Revolution, in this world informed, to the quick of its marrow, by intimations of a vague and menacing storm, there emerge, in place of the saucy and roguish little fops of Crébillon *filis*, the finished lords of perversity, the accomplished libertines, the master-minds of practical and theoretical immorality. They are men without bowels or remorse or infirmity. They are amiable, impudent, hypocritical, patient and strong. They are consistent, determined, and fertile in invention. They know the value of every opportunity, the effect of a well-timed act of bounty or virtue, the proper employment of maids, valets and scandal, every and any mean weapon. They have reckoned coldly just how many "outrages a man may afford," and they stop at nothing. Failing to rifle a woman's heart and steal from her desk its secrets, they fall to regretting that a lover's education does not include the talents of a pickpocket, indispensable to a career of intrigue. Their first principle is never to conclude an affair till they have acquired evidence incriminating to the woman; they seduce only to destroy, they betray but to cheat. Their delight, their joy, is "to make a virtue die the death lingeringly and to rivet the eyes of the woman on its agony"; and they pause in mid-career, to halt her at every step,

every station of shame and despair, to make her taste the full gall of defeat and pass to her final downfall slowly enough for remorse to keep gaol step. Their sport, of which they are almost ashamed, so little has it cost them, is to violate a novice, rob her condescendingly of her honor, and to hear this child go into gales of laughter (ah, there's the thrill!) as they imitate her mother, who is lying next door, with only a thin partition to shield her from the shame and sneers of her own flesh-and-blood!—The eighteenth century reveals here, in this final trait, the utmost limit of its invention in the realm of moral ferocity.

And woman is the peer of man, surpasses him frequently in the recklessness of her licentious love-making. A new type evolves, a type in whom all the aptitudes, all the talents, all the refinements of her sex turn to a kind of deliberate cruelty, that is truly appalling. Depravity, in some few abominable women, rises to an almost satanic height. Native duplicity, acquired dissimulation; a feal eye, a face controlled; an effortless lie of her whole person; profound observation, a penetrating wit; the domination of the senses; curiosity, a craving for skill and experience, which makes of love merely a subject of study, a series of facts to be assembled and sifted; to such formidable faculties and talents do these women owe, even in youth, abilities and acumen worthy of a great minister. They studied the human heart, reading others' by their own; learned that each held a vital secret; and resolved to build their power on its discovery. Scrupulously careful of appearance, shrouding their designs by a blameless reputation, they studied seriously in the ethical philosophers and weighed in their own minds just what could be done, what might be said, and what must be assumed. Thus equipped, secret, deep, impenetrable, invulnerable, they bring to love or vengeance a cool heart, unfailing presence of mind, the cynical frankness of a great lady heightened by a kind of implacable frivolity. Such women ruin a lover for the love of it. They sow temptation in candor, laxity in innocence.

Women whose virtue offends them they martyrize; and in striking them to the quick, they hiss with venomous and forked tongue, "Ah, when a woman wounds another, the pang is mortal." They broach dishonor in a family like a thunderclap; they arm men with mortal quarrels and blades. Amazing women—chilling and fascinating! They may be said to stand, in a moral sense, head and shoulders above the Messalina of antiquity. They reveal in their own lives a corruption so consummate, that one is inclined to call it an ideal infamy: the debauch of perverse passions, the obscene orgy of Evil!

Let no one suppose that these arch-types, these immitigable examples, are imaginary. They have not sprung from the brain of Laclos, they are not the figments of a novelist: they are actual denizens of this world, living and breathing members of this society. Contemporary witnesses are there to attest their truth; their portraits are indited with the initials of the sitters. No. The models are all too many. Is not Valmont the sobriquet of a well-known scoundrel? And Monsieur de Choiseul? He began his great career—how? As a conquering male, a ruthless heart-breaker, a finished libertine, moving straight to the goal at a sly lope, advancing never a step nor a word without a tried scheme, subduing the sex by sarcasm, menacing it by wit, mastering it by fear. But why mention Choiseul? Laclos had seen the prototype of his infamous Marquis de Louvois in the Comte de Frise, the torturer in ordinary of Madame de Blot.—And the woman to whom he lent such infernal resources and charms: had he not met her and sketched her from life? We have the word both of the Prince de Ligne and of Tilly. Laclos admitted to them, in confidence, that he had only to strip the conscience of a great lady of Grenoble, the Marquise L. T. D. P. M., and relate her life, to find his Marquise de Merteuil.

Now, where was it to end? How was this defiling of love, of which we have sought to trace the effrontery, the depth, the growing and insatiable appetites, to end? Could

it end at all, before it had given the full measure of its excesses and outrages? There is an inexorable logic in the evil passions of humanity, which forces them to run their course and culminate at last in some final and absolute abomination. That law had assigned to the carnal malice of the eighteenth century its crowning monstrosity. Too deeply was the habit of moral cruelty ingrained in the mind of the time not to descend from the brain to the senses. Men had played too long and too callously with the sufferings of the heart not to be tempted to make the flesh writhe, more surely, more visibly. Why, after draining all the anguish of her soul, not venture on her flesh? Why indeed? Why not seek baldly in her blood the thrills of a woman's tears? This leads to a doctrine, toward which the whole century had been unwittingly tending, a doctrine which is in fact merely the embodiment of its cravings; and is it not apocalyptically right, that the closing word should be uttered, that this frenzy of cruelty should be digested to an ideal and a revelation, at the end of all these refinements of degeneracy, all these progresses toward the martyrdom of woman, by a Marquis de Sade, who comes, in the days of the bloody guillotine, to introduce Terror into Love?

Enough: let us not sink lower. Let us not explore further the putrid parts of the eighteenth century. History must pause somewhere; let it do so on the brink of this abyss of filth. For beyond this point we are past the pale; beyond this point humanity is no more; nothing is left but a miasmatic realm, where we stifle, where the light would gutter out, if we attempted to raise it.

Let us turn back. Let us mount once more toward life, light and air; toward Nature; toward Passion and Truth; toward the health, strength, and beauty of human affections. After this long diagnosis of all the plagues and sorespots of the most noble faculties of the heart, we must

shake off our disgust. We must pass from this vitiated atmosphere. The soul craves a vantage point, from which to draw breath, a breath to clear away the clouds, a ray of light to deliver it, a prospect to console it, a clearing where it can recover the sense of its sound instincts, its pure affections, its everlasting illusions, its divine vitality. It is time, more than time, to look for true love, to retrieve it and show what it yet retained of honor, sincerity, and devotion; what sacrifices it exacted; what sorrows it yet cost; what virtues it wrung from the frailty of women in an age of inconstancy, license and debauchery.

Though it was less advertised and less popular than galantry, though it was relegated to the background, without the common pale of manners, ideals, and practices, Love had nevertheless its place in the eighteenth century. Take the man, who best painted its insolent modes, its elegant cynicism, its mannerly license, the author of *Le Sopha*, *Les Égaréments du coeur et de l'esprit*, and *La Nuit et le Moment*; and what do we find in his own life, under his work? a mysterious passion, a mute faith and joy, the love of his Mademoiselle de Stafford.¹—There you have the period: it flaunted its scandals, but it knew love.

Scandalously pure are the tears of a love, which leaves, at the opening of the century, one of those appealing memories, over which legend weaves its arms and toward whose altar lovers of all time wend their way in pilgrimage. A woman retrieves the honor and beauty of love by redeeming its decency and devotion. She bequeaths to posterity one

¹ It is a strange tale, this love of Crébillon *filz* for Mademoiselle de Stafford. The success of his novels in London is such that a young Englishwoman of good birth and devout and retiring life, falls in love with the author and makes a trip to Paris to see him. She meets the author of *Le Sopha* at the house of Madame de Saint-Maure, loves him, marries him secretly, and gives up for his sake her land, her name, and her family. Crébillon lives, in Paris, in profound seclusion and the most felicitous union with this person. She is gentle, loving, and sensible; homely and squint-eyed; not very rich; and she subsists as she can on a pension (1000 pounds) which My Lord Stafford pays her, when and as he is able to. A boy, the only fruit of the marriage, before it was brought to light by the meddling tongues of her relatives, died in 1750, and the mother was in her grave before the year 1771.

of those lowly tales that outlive time and, nestling in the byways of History, in its glades, far from its scheming and strife, beckon like a shrine, where the mind rests from the rumble of the highway, puts by all mortal and fleeting cares, retires, muses, and renews itself. . . .

And it is in the heyday of license, at the high tide of the Regency that this woman loves as she does. It is in the zenith of the Regency, that she discloses the most noble and appealing virtues of love. Amid the scandals of the Palais-Royal and the ribald songs of the *roué*, this plaint rises, this moan, this tender and bleeding lament, this lament of a dove wounded in a wood full of Satyrs! In the immediate environment of a Madame de Parabère, a Mademoiselle Aissé delivers herself, body and soul, to her Chevalier d'Aydie. She writes: "Few know the delight of loving with delicacy enough to prefer the welfare of the object of our love to our own." And her whole life is a sacrifice to the welfare of her lover. The Chevalier loves her; but she finds courage to decline his hand. "No. I value his glory too highly," she says, as she closes her eyes on this too fond dream. "To make his life so sweet, that he may never know sweeter" is, in her own words, the only art and ambition she knows. Sweetness is the word forever flowing from her heart to her pen, that gives her letters their immortal accent of a caress. When one day Madame de Ferriol asked her how she had bewitched the Chevalier, she replied naïvely: "The only charm I knew was to love him, since I must, and to make his life sweeter than any." Her heart and her life lie in that reply: her beauty of nature is the charm of her memory. She loves, "since she must." She loves, and she struggles. Born for virtue, only in passion had she found it, and she sees her duty in her lapse. She struggles, succumbs, and struggles again. She dreads whatever draws her to him, and she is wretched when she is away from him. "To cut out the heart of a violent passion . . . truly, that is frightful: death is no worse. I doubt if I survive it." This is how she writes to

an exhorting friend, who is guiding, consoling and sustaining her; and the efforts she makes to check it are heart-rending. She bleeds drop by drop. Her regret is so painful, her shame so frank and sincere, that at times remorse gives her an almost seraphic character and contrition a new innocence. Her beauty is fading, she does not even regret it: she is losing her health and strength, and she lets them go without a struggle. Illness calms her, brings her nearer to salvation. Her sacrifice kills her, but she trusts in the mercy of God, who sees her heart. And yet—what love, what love yet for that lover, from whom she must hide her anguish, whose eyes she dare not meet lest she fail, and of whom she writes on her death-bed: “He thinks to save me by liberality. He gives to the whole house. He gives to my cow! He sends it hay. To one he gives the means of teaching his child a trade, to another to buy tippetts and ribbons, to all he meets, to all who need, he gives, gives, gives. It borders on madness. When I asked him what he would gain by it—to make all who serve you care for you, he answered.” Then the priest comes; she takes leave of the world, she smiles at the thought of leaving her wretched flesh, she raises her heart to God, whom she sees as a Being utterly beneficent; and love dies in a state of grace. At the end of the century, something of this woman’s soul, which takes its flight like that of a virgin, seems to haunt the white robes of Virginie.

After the revelation in Mademoiselle Aissé of its tender and inward grace, its passionate debility, love appears brilliantly in a woman of totally opposed temperament, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. Here love is a devouring flame, restless, forever reviving, eddying, struggling, and ravaging in its own throes. It is all action, energy, violence, freedom and fury; it subsists by everything which would have been too stormy and robust for the heart of a Mademoiselle Aissé. It lives by wasting itself. Examine it: you will hold in your hand the strongest heart-beat of the eighteenth century. For hers is not merely the passion of one woman:

it reveals all the longings and restlessness of her time. It holds the secret sufferings of a little band of lofty souls, too richly endowed for their time, who have run the whole gamut of life in a trice, drained the world at a draught, savored to the lees all that the pleasures, resources and pursuits of society had to offer them for a full and active life. At the dregs of disgust, at the end of all things, wounded in every fibre of their being by the emptiness their ardor has made of all the everyday interests of life, they succumb, in this atmosphere so selfish and unfeeling, to a desperate and irresistible need of loving, and of loving madly, with rapture and despair. They want to plunge into love as into a torrent, to sink in it, and to feel its welter and weight roll over their hearts. They admit it, loudly: they care nothing for success, for admiration, for being found fair or wise, for the favor of a preference (that great favor of the day!) or for the thrills of gratified vanity. The only success they crave is the success of the heart. They make it their vocation and their boast to love. Their one ambition is to be thought worthy of love and capable of suffering. Over and over they say, "You shall see how I can love: I live for, I am born for love. . . ." Kindle me, crush me, inflame me: this is their obstinate hope and their plea. They are panting to flee the world, the cold world of their day, and to nurture in themselves a single thought. And as usually these women have never known, in childhood and youth, the moving and ennobling influences of religion, the tender warmth of piety, they embrace love like a religion. They approach it on their knees, they offer it abject obedience. Natures of pure reason, who have known no moral law other than reason, proud spirits battered on flattery and but lately so vain, they lose, on love's first visitation, all sense of their place or importance in the world, and hasten to humble themselves like Magdalens, like contrite courtesans. Their self-love, the mainspring of their being, they immolate to the beloved; and they delight in making him trample on it. They attend him as the deity through whom

they draw breath, submissive and mortified, patient under every ordeal, almost grateful to suffer.

This utter submission is so marked in the case of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, that it seems an even more characteristic trait of her love than its violence and exuberance. It is difficult to recognize the mistress of one of the leading *salons* of Paris in a woman whose love is so shrinking, who begs so timidly and with a voice so hushed for the least little place in the heart of her lover; who thanks him so warmly for the interest his letters deign to show; who apologizes so humbly for writing him three times a week. Little as he gives her, that little is always more than she merits; and she deems herself cold in her gratitude, though she pours her whole heart into its expression. Nothing can raise her from this humble and suppliant attitude; and all the marks of love she receives fail to give her confidence to claim what she longs to hear from her lover. She abases herself continually before Monsieur de Guibert; and the surrender is so complete, that she is no longer in tune with the time, in key with the habits and sentiments of the world. The pleasures she still encounters about her have lost all meaning for her; and, compared to her love, public opinion weighs so little that she is prepared to brave it to see Monsieur de Guibert and love him every hour of her life. There is in this woman a marvelous improvidence, a supreme exaltation, a constant aspiration; and from her every thought, from all the energies of her spirit, all the powers of her heart, rises that cry of rapture and affection—a prayer offering a kiss.

"In every moment of my life, 1774.

My dear: I suffer, I love you, and I look for you."

Love lost in its object has not in modern annals a greater model than this woman, who offers her lover all her feelings and inner life; who shares with him all her thoughts, which, in her finely-felt words, "she can only possess by entrusting them to him"; who denies herself everything in which he

has no part; who is satisfied to live but for him; who is divorced from her own personality and dead, as it were, to herself; who declines all intercourse, shutting her door to Diderot and his conversation, which, she says, importunes her attention; who lives among her books without light and in silence, alone, utterly lost in the enjoyment of that new soul Monsieur de Guibert has bestowed on her with three little words, "I love you," and so profoundly ensconced in that enjoyment, that she loses all faculty of recalling the past or foreseeing the future. And when the sorry fellow, whom she has magnified with all her love, passes from indifference to cruelty, what struggles, what sufferings, what momentary revolts, retracted at once with abasements and pathetic submission! what a painful struggle to confine her overflowing heart to the convenience and good pleasure of Monsieur de Guibert! Listen to her, for instance, soliciting the secrets of his heart and boasting, poor soul, that he need not consider her own! What a rôle, what a life, what a long martyrdom! Begging to be left to her fate; begging to return to his breast; swearing she is mistress of her passion; relapsing into convulsions of despair; drowning herself night after night in the music of *Orpheus*, which wracks her heart; listening nightly to "I have lost my Eurydice," which touches her to the quick of her tears, her memories, her sorrow; petitioning the fellow for a word, one little word, even a word of loathing; promising to trouble him no longer, to expect nothing; planning a rich match for him, a young, pretty wife; for his sake running, hurrying, visiting, intriguing, despite her cough and her weakness; at his play, praying on her knees for its success; begging of his charity, while she serves him in every conceivable way, the alms of her necessity, that she may not die of grief; venturing once more to implore his portrait; trying to make him realize, without touching him too deeply, that she is dying; imploring him to meet her again at some dinner; repeating over and over, "When shall I see you? How long shall I see you?"; writing from what she knows to be her

death-bed: "Do not love me, but suffer me to love you and to tell it to you a hundred, hundred times"—these are the phases of that long appalling martyrdom of a woman destined so clearly to be the model of devoted love, that her agony is in a way a transsubstantiation of passion. With a hand already numb with death she writes: "The throbbing of my heart, the beating of my pulse, my breath, all now is but the effect of passion. It is clearer, more marked now than ever, not that it is stronger, but because it will soon be over, like a light that shines brightest before it burns out forever."

Passion! It has left models enough in this age, sufficient great and adorable traces to redeem all the callousness of the period. In some few elect hearts, it has been, as it were, a hallowing virtue; it has been, in many a frail soul, a kind of ransom and excuse. How many fine impulses and generous sentiments it inspired even in those, who yielded to the current conception of love, and whose lapses were conspicuous amid the sullied manners of that time! What pages it dictated to the adulterous, pages still warm, their yellowed ink revealing the traces of tears and of blood! After the letters of Mademoiselle Aissé to the Chevalier d'Aydie, and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to Guibert, turn to these two by a wretched woman who loved, with the frankness of her time, the man most beloved of her time: turn to the letters written by Madame de la Popelinière to Richelieu. What burning embraces! What an incessant repetition of the words, *My heart*, iterated over and over like a penetrating, insistent, mechanical litany, like the spasm of a dying woman gasping for breath! Fire courses through these lines, a flame that consumes and purifies; and may we not say that here we see Love redeemed by Passion even in the very outrage of Love?

"My dear lover my dear heart how comes it you write me so coldly when you are my life and my god I adore you dear heart I well know I am unjust for you have your claims and they are many and leave you no liberty to write me

they torment you I am certain dear heart yet I missed in your letter those expressions and sentiments inspired by the heart and that procure as much pleasure to write as to read I own to a feeling when I write you dear lover that gives me well-nigh a fever and excites me no less. Learning the courier was not yet departed I could not but write you one little word to make amends for the cold and spiteful letter I writ yesterday I feel more the pain it caused you than the cruelest pains, how greatly I love you I shall never be able to say dear lover dear heart nor will you ever love me enough to know dear heart I am dying without you, my glands are not healing they are bigger by twice what they were and I have some new ones I am a little alarmed but for no other reason for my health is sound and it will prove nothing as I hope. Believe me I implore you and never fear. My dear lover your absence will cost me my life I am past hope. I have never loved none but you I am the most wretched woman alive dear heart alas do you love me as I love you I doubt it you do not feel with the same warmth I know it. But at least love me as much as you may. . . .”

* * *

“My dear heart, you love me more than any ever you loved yet, can it be true I do fear it is the goodness of your heart that prompts you to say so to comfort me and make me take patience yet how shall I be patient that am mad with your kisses and past all remedy too. Yesterday I omitted to say that my portrait is being painted but I can not send you a copy dear heart, the painter is one named Marolle who works in the house all day long, besides I doubt if it resembles me, your are right my features have too much mobility it is for my brother he desired it and for him it is painted yet if it please you you shall have it without ado he will willingly make me the gift of it but you will not want it when you hold the model in your arms dear heart how I long for you I would give an arm for you to hold you I would I vow I long for you with the liveliest

impatience and it grows every day till I know not how to come up with the night and from the night with the day and the day the week and then the month ah dear heart my life is cruel what torture. You can not conceive nor I have thought how no sport amuses me but let us say no more on it for it will afflict you and me it consoles not and nothing will bring you back sooner nothing nothing I sometimes fancy that were I to send you word dear heart to come cost what it may you would come but I must be distracted indeed to propose that you leave everything for my sake aye far gone far gone I conjure you on the contrary to remain but dear heart the least that may be I beseech you."

Is this the full measure of the love of the age? No. Among the historic attachments of the time we must not forget one more impassioned in its purity than that of Madame de la Popelinière, more nobly devoted than the love of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, more chaste than the dream of little Mademoiselle Aissé. And that love we find in the proud house of Condé.

The Princesse de Condé, in consequence of a fall that had dislocated her knee, was taking the waters at Bourbon l'Archambault, in 1786. The life of the watering-resort suspended the requirements of etiquette, and the princess, who is seven and twenty at the time, chats, dines and strolls with the bathers. Thus it is that a youth of twenty-one offers her his arm and guides her unsteady steps over the stones of the vineyards. A word which the princess lets fall one day on the burden of grandeur draws them together, and at the end of the third day intimacy has ripened into love.

The season over, they separate. The princess corresponds. She writes him letters full of childish endearments, in which a mystic tenderness gives her style almost the fervor of devout love. In page after page she deploras the great world "which prevents her from thinking as she would

of the object of her affections." On every page she repeats, "You are ever with me, you never leave me." She refuses to read *Werther*, lest it occupy her thoughts, "all her thoughts being for her friend, all her heart and all her soul." She is almost vexed to be found pretty; she would be so only for her lover.

And ever and ever, amid the *fêtes* of Chantilly and Fontainebleau, the memories of Archambault recur with the refrain: "Oh, the little cots in the vineyards!"

To love, thus, from afar; to love a man she has no hope of meeting more than three or four times a year, and then only in society; to love with a self-denying love that lives on a diet of memories and occasional letters: this is enough for a nature so pure. She writes: "Love fills my heart: that is to be happy, and to that happiness I yield myself wholly." And is not her whole soul in the portrait she draws of herself in another letter: "I am good and I can love truly, that is all"?

In the proud blood of the Condés it is remarkable to find such humility as this princess shows, so fine and unforced a sacrifice of her rank and greatness, such amazing abnegation in entrusting her happiness to the little officer with these words: "My dear, the happiness of your *trusty* is in your hands, on you it depends from now on; the moment you determine she shall enjoy it no longer you will plunge her into an abyss of grief." There is in these letters an adorable feminine art of foreshortening, of effacing herself, of making herself ever so small, as it were, to raise the beloved to her level. Two months and a half it lasts, moistened with happy tears, this innocent winnowing of the old words, *I love you*, in which the woman never thinks of displaying her wit or her powers but only her heart. She lets fall a conscious reflection only by chance and, as it were, unawares in a page like this one: "We women, my dear, are born for infirmity, we need support; all our education makes us understand that we are slaves and must always remain so. This idea is deeply impressed on our

souls destined to submission; the man who is to rule there is welcome; moreover we have little else to delight us; constantly crossed in our inclinations, our pleasures, by the prejudices, usages and proprieties of the world, we have nothing of which to dispose but our hearts, and those we are obliged to lock in our bosoms: all this explains, I believe, why we attach ourselves more strongly or at least more constantly." The passion of Madame de Condé is a feeling so true, so sincere, so profound, so pure and extraordinary in that corrupt period, that those of her family who divined it under her confusion, her quick blushes, and fond reveries, true Condés though they were, felt for her a secret compassion.

One day her brother, the Duc de Bourbon, approached her, considered her attentively for some time, pressed her hand and kissed her with tears in his eyes—his emotion a delicate tribute of pity. The Prince de Condé himself, despite the fond war he at first waged on her inclination, momentarily won by it, almost lent the young officer a hand in his promotion from the Carabineers to the French Guards, a promotion which was to open the hôtel de Condé and Chantilly to him.

But, just when the dreams of the lovers were about to be realized, the timid princess took alarm from certain allusions which reached her ears. "Despite the extreme innocence of her sentiments" for Monsieur de la Gervaisais, her scruples awoke. Exhausted by these inward struggles, she fell ill. In this state of moral distress, she was visited by a woman of the world, who chanced to narrate that for three years she had loved a man, who was a near relative; for two years and a half they had both believed it a question of friendship and had indulged that passion freely; but, for the last six months, the struggles they had undergone had convinced them that they had been blind to the real nature of their sentiments; and she added that she worshiped the man, that she could not find courage to forego him, that she hoped to be able to resist but that. . . .

then she suddenly broke into an apostrophe which startled the princess: "Ah, you are fortunate: you have been spared all that!"

This apostrophe and the guidance which this woman looked to her for, roused her from her fond dreams. Religion summoned her. Triumphant at last over herself, the woman who was later to be the Mother-Superior of the *Dames de l'Adoration Perpétuelle* sat down to write the letter which begins: "Ah! how hard it is to break a silence I have observed so long! I shall incur hatred maybe. Hatred! O Heavens! Let it be so. He shall hate me: what I have so dreaded shall now come to be: I desire it. May he forget me and never be unhappy. Ah, dear God, how shall I tell him? how shall I speak? Yet speak I must, and forever!"

She implored him to love her no longer and to make no attempt to see her, and, by a supreme effort, concluded with these lines: "This is the last letter you will receive from me; send a word in reply, that I may know what to hope for, or life or death. Ah, how I shall dread opening it! Mark now: if it be not too cruel for a heart so feeling as is that of your soul's trust, do this for me—set a little cross on the envelope—and do not forget, for this I implore you on my knees."

Thus ends, in this strange eighteenth century, a romance which has all the tender bloom of some love-tale of a very young Age.

CHAPTER V

MARRIED LIFE

JUST AS WE have seen Love preserve, amid the general corruption of manners, its saving graces—devotion and constancy and sacrifice—so we shall see Marriage maintain, in the face of fashion, those older fashions of virtue, which ennoble it. Marriage redeems its duties, as passion does its rights, by some outstanding examples.

It can not with justice be denied: however far husband and wife may have drifted apart, however lax the conjugal tie may appear, however common the prostitution of marriage to a loose and unprincipled life, which seems to have known no home, no headquarters, and to have united by a fireless hearth only the politeness of two indifferences—the traditions and joys of that intimate union, in which two lives merge and blend, were none the less religiously preserved in many families. The joys of the home, heroic fidelity, the murmured pillow-tales of unblushing peace, the gentle discipline of love, the daily communion of mind, heart, and soul, these that Age also knew: it has given in its highest spheres rare and unexpected examples of such a sacrament; it has left of it a memory serene and consoling.

In the *Mémoires* of private life we see couples closely united, young husbands and wives passionately devoted, older ones living their whole lives together, hearts clinging in despair to a lost partner. Of many of these marriages there lingers a memory as romantically brave as a tale of old time. Is it not in this very age that conjugal love shows the delicate, ingenious, and touching tenderness of the following anecdote? A woman lies dying, condemned by her physicians. Her husband, realizing that she reads her

fate in his eyes, buys her a diamond necklace worth 48,000 pounds, talks to her of the day she will wear it, and, flashing the bauble on her bed and hope before her eyes—health, healing, life!—lulls her last hours in a dream! And this husband, the Marquis de Choiseul, was poor: he had to mortgage an estate to buy those diamonds, which reverted by a term of the marriage contract to her family.—Among so many women who were easy game, when the King was the hunter, what is to be said of this one? The Comtesse de Périgord denies her sovereign's suit, rebukes it by a glacial respect, and flees it in voluntary exile on an estate near Barbézieux; an exile from which she returns only after long years, on receipt of this letter, in which Louis XV offers a King's apologies: "My daughters, Madame, have just lost their lady-of-honor: that position is your due, as much by reason of your lofty virtues as by the name you bear." And if Marriage has its heroines, it has its martyrs too: la Trémouille shuts himself up to die with his wife, stricken with small-pox.

Even in marriages where the age introduces the customary fashionable breach love and devotion survive. They survive coldness, betrayal and insult. They absolve with some such supreme caress as that which the Duchesse de Richelieu hoarded all her life for a husband whose love for the whole tribe of wives might well have precluded the love of his own. Madame de Richelieu had just been confessed by Father Ségaud. Upon Richelieu asking her if she had found peace, "Oh yes, my dear," she replied, "he did not forbid me to love you." And, summoning her ebbing strength and life to embrace him, almost with her last breath she whispered, in a voice choked with sobs, that she had longed all her life to die in his arms!

But the greatest examples of love in marriage are to be found in the homes of ministers, in those close unions of so many statesmen with women entirely devoted to their ideals, their fortunes and their fame, often to their labors. Throughout the whole period we find ministers drawing

comfort and strength from the joys of their home life, the inspirations of a wife's imagination and the consolations of her love. Where shall we look for fifty even years of happiness like those of the Marquis de Croissy? Why, in the marriage of Monsieur and Madame de Maurepas, who sent men's thoughts woolgathering with Philemon and Baucis. At the death of Monsieur de Maurepas, his wife exclaimed memorably that "they had spent fifty years together and not one day apart." And how many others as well mated! There are the Maréchal and Maréchale de Beauvau; there are the Chauvelins, with the husband pushing his respect of conjugal fidelity to well-nigh quixotic lengths; there are the Vergennes; there is the home where, despite all the truanancies of the husband, the wife remains so indulgent, so amiable, so pure, that of the Choiseuls; where the charm, the warmth of heart, the welling humanity and tender companionship, the even disposition and resourceful mind of the wife almost succeed in imparting something of these qualities to the husband, solacing the fatigues of his ministerial career with relief and pleasure, and his exile with consolation. And finally there is the marriage of Monsieur and Madame Necker, where happiness rests on enthusiasm, where pride is the bond, and the love of the wife for her husband is idolatry.

Thus, in the eighteenth century, the institution of Marriage endures. A certain number of couples, rising above public opinion, claim the right to be happy. In fact, some husbands go further; in, as it were, the most whimsical spirit of contradiction to their time, they expect more, far more, of marriage than quiet love and affection: they want passion. Their jealousy exacts of the wife a complete self-surrender. They will not even allow her her friends; they begrudge her her mother. A wife must live, they think, only for her husband; and if they fail to find one willing to submit to these conditions, they complain that they are ill-used: "she does not love them, she does not live for them, they are not for her the dearest object in life." Such is

the sincere lament, the despairing sorrow of Madame de Pompadour's unhappy brother, the Marquis de Marigny.

Of the yoke and wreath, the very heart of Marriage, no better picture remains than the series of prints in which Moreau has painted the home of his day, on work day and holiday. There we see the other side of the Baudouins and Lavreinces: there we see a husband and wife united in the present and for the future by the little beings over whose heads their eyes, their hands and their souls meet. Here, in the first, we see Madame in morning gown and night bonnet, smiling knowingly as one smiles at a dream coming true, listening to the doctor, who steadies himself on his crow-beaked cane to inform her that she is to become a mother. A few pages further on, she takes to her pillow, in a loose floating gown, on a day-bed reassuringly close to the mirror. She never ventures downstairs except on the arm of her husband; she goes to church or to the Tuileries only in an even-swaying chaise lugged by two strapping Picardese porters. In defiance of Tronchin—that martinet!—who would have her walk and shop alone, in defiance, I say, of Tronchin, who is sure—that martinet, that martinet!—sure to rally her if he meets her, she ventures just a few teetering steps, and if a pebble turn under her heel, her husband changes color and mops his brow. No privation is too hard for them to launch the child, to whom already they are bound by sacrifice and for whom the mother is so happy to be able to suffer. She gives up everything, shopping and gaming and dancing and all her brilliant vigils, and renounces the world to husband her strength; for she is not one of those women who undergo this period so impatiently and who, with an air annoyed, weary, and rueful for a pleasure put off or a supper curtailed, bring into the world “a being skimped in his very conception.” No. She is a mother the moment she learns she is to be one.—And by-and-bye comes the draper, with a hamper-full of laces and baby-clothes; and together they lay the campaign with frills for flags and store of fine *Argentan*-point. After

her delivery, she spends a fortnight on her *chaise-longue*, her feet and legs bundled in one of those foot-wraps, which are less underproppings than laurels; and, on the fifteenth day, she goes out for her first visit to church and her praise-be to God.

Now that she is a mother, she wants to nourish her infant; for from that tender duty she no longer begs off on the grounds that ladies so lately advanced: "Nourish an infant! Indeed, Indeed! A pleasant pastime, a proper occupation! . . . Upon my word . . . and by my fay . . . and save you, sir, said she! . . . Nourish a —? I must have my sleep o'nights . . . or must I not? And visits by day. . . . And a new gown to stale at the Opera, the play, the Petit-Cours. . . . And then I play . . . and then I dance. . . . And then . . . and then . . . What! Must the brat have my paps too?"—No, this mother puts her foot down, in defiance of fashion. She ignores, as did Madame d'Epinaÿ, the amazement of her family and friends at that challenging breast. Neither her mother's alarm, nor the eccentricity she is sure to be taxed with, nor the world's venging smile if the burden prove past her strength, nothing can stop her. It was but yesterday that, despite all the urging and threats of her physicians, she was ready, sooner than give suck, to poultice her throat and endanger her health with all sorts of powders that Lecrom and other of the King's privileged charlatans swore would stop her milk in twice twenty-four hours; and to-day she would think herself but half a mother, if she did not give suck. The physicians had frightened her; but Rousseau had touched her.¹

If she is too frail to nourish her child, she must at least keep it at home with her. And it grows under her eyes, on her breast, within reach of her kisses, filling her every hour

¹The suckling of their children by the mothers of Paris, moreover, was not attended with the success foreseen by the partisans of Rousseau. These mothers assumed only the easier duties of their rôle, and a great number of children, nourished on an acrid and overheated blood, perished. The physicians were finally obliged to forbid women to give suck.

with the bliss of those hallowed delights, those *delights of Motherhood*, of which the age has left us so luminous a picture, so smilingly enlivened by sun and verdure, so playfully brimming with the laughter that dapples a baby mouth and dimples in the eyes of the parent. In a garden green, beneath a statue of Venus flogging Dan Cupid with roses, clinging to her husband, who clings to an infant, who clings to nothing if not to his wisp of a shirt riding nose over ears, as he climbs rattle-wards high, high overhead—this is how we see, in its triumphant joy, the Motherhood of the time, the Mother of the last years of the century.

And soon she will not be satisfied to have her child at her feet, growing at her knees, to hoard its gayety as it heaps her happy lap with mirth; she will want to steal a march on the future and, wetting her finger on her lips, will draw on its reflecting soul the first rudiments of mind and heart. She will claim its education, will teach it herself, and be, like Madame de Montulle, the governess of her children.

The tendency of education, in the first half of the century, as women practice it, is clearly indicated by Madame Geoffrin in her training of her grand-daughter. This education is above all a moral education. It is not, in the strict sense of the word, *instruction* at all; the teacher is concerned less with *teaching* than with *forming* her pupil. She does not burden the little girl with lessons, does not tax her memory with studies: it is no part of her purpose to cram her with information; in that she shows the prudence and sagacity of her day, and she dreads nothing more than to have her fledgling grow up an owl. What she aims to develop in the little woman who is shaping under her far from rigorous hand is merely the woman herself, the individuality of a being capable of thinking and feeling for itself. To think and to feel; that is what this education guides, encourages, incites and steadies in the little girl confided to its direction, whom it respects always as a personality, free, sincere and individual. She reasons with the budding mind, trains its first shoots, draws out the



Photo Giraudon

JEAURAT—*L'Exemple des Mères*

infant tendrils; and eschewing the burdens, the bondage, the aversions of mere book-knowledge, forms the child's spirit slowly by letting it play with its own reflections, its fancies and even its ignorance. To this rudimentary training, which is never taxing or depressing, the woman of the time owes more than her faculties, she owes her character; for is it not the basis of that independence of thought and freedom of expression, that vital and profound originality, which we see displayed from one end of the century to the other by women, who whet their keen wits on their weak spelling, their sense on experience, and their knowledge of life on their early habits of discernment?

Now, however, with the new zeal for maternal instruction, that shrewdness and practical sense disappear. To the older system, which had left the child to the promptings of its own nature, succeeds a strictly pedagogic education. The aptitudes of a schoolmistress develop in the mother, personified in two women, who represent completely the philosophic education and the *romanticized* education of the end of the century: Madame de Genlis and Madame d'Épinay. Glance over their books, those manuals modestly entitled the hints of a mother's heart for the moral good and intellectual advancement of a daughter; thumb those treatises, proposed under the thin guise of maternal affection as the pattern to be adopted for all girls born since 1770—and you will hardly find a single thought that is not far above the head, a single lesson that is not grotesquely unsuited to the capacities, of a child. In form alone are they addressed to children; and at that they appeal, as in the *Conversations d'Emilie*, to her five year old heart and mind in terms of metaphysical entities. They form her soul and develop her heart as a system is built, on principles. Are they not bent on bringing out in the child, haply, a woman, but surely a *moral ruminant*? To make her obedient, they tell her, for instance, that only the performance of duty can bring happiness. To make her patient, they justify adversity by the most approved arguments of stoical

philosophy. In the realm of monkeydom, the child learns that her monkey is an Organic Being, which lives, feels and dies. The delight of a new dress is an occasion to improve her, by reproving her, on three counts, for delighting in so vain a thing as a dress. They give her prescriptions for ordering her conduct, and proofs of the superiority of character over beauty, and explanations of the reasonable nature of man and beast; they go so far as to define an author as "a man who meditates in public"! Such an education, of course, leaves nothing but words in the child's memory; it strains her mind as her dress strains her waist; it is a Fool's Paradise of Pedantry condensed, as it were, into a first catechism of that Religion of Reason, which at the close of the century is the only religion left in France.

We must not be misled, however, by these appealing domestic scenes, inspired far more by the aspirations than the practice of the time. These graces, these virtues, these shining examples of domesticity, this motherly zeal, must not be allowed to hide the true nature of Marriage, as it appears in everyday practice, in the innermost workings of the time. They must not make us forget the average marriage, the type vouched for and depicted by so many, many evidences, even by distortion and caricature, anecdotes, pamphlets, and satires, by all the testimonies of the moral history of a period.

Thus considered, Marriage in the eighteenth century appears no longer as an institution or a sacrament, but merely as a contract toward the continuation of a name and the preservation of a breed, a contract involving neither the constancy of the man nor the fidelity of the woman. It implies nothing for the society of that time that it does for ours. It elicits in the man and the woman none of the feelings aroused by the conviction that the tie contracted springs from the heart. It does not imply an idea of honor: indeed, it is hardly compatible with it; that is its

infallible mark, its original sin, and also, be it said, its excuse.

Moreover, everything in that age conspired against Marriage. In league against it are the laxities, the accommodations of social morality, the daily increasing freedom of personal habits. Under the Regency and after it, a certain temerity and resolution were required to take a lover. To meet, to associate at all, called for the overcoming of great obstacles, the devising of means, for ingenuity in cheating the eyes of the world; an error needed boldness for its consummation. Scandal was a risk, effrontery was no nostrum, a bold face could not thrive sweet honor clean. Not yet. But in time these slender restraints are dismissed, these responsibilities lapse. Women entertain men of their years. They go to the Opera Ball with a maid. They attend the play alone, in a private box, with men. Fashion accords them all those maneuvers which formerly would have marked the woman who employed them as questionable. But now all the cards are in her hand: maneuvers, meetings, occasions—every facility is hers. She no longer slips, she plunges.

Marriage has to contend, also, with the conveniences of society, with the obligations and occupations of the time, with the husband's frequent absences, which abandon the wife to herself and to her discretion. In the aristocracy a husband and wife are constantly parted by attendance at Court, or a governorship in the provinces, or garrison duty, or service with the King and the Army. The husband belongs to the Court and to Arms before ever he belongs to his wife. While he is campaigning with flag and King through Flanders, Germany, or Italy, Paris besieges her with boredom, freedom, and pleasure; or, if she retires to an estate, far from finding safety, she finds the temptations of solitude and the assurance of secrecy. And the ordeal of these separations continues through the whole period, exposing the husband's honor to so many reverses and requiring of the wife so much patience, firmness and courage.

In following her husband to the garrison, Madame d'Avary, the sister of Madame de Coaslin, set a precedent at first much criticized but later followed by fashion, by the leaders of youth, beauty, and rank, whom we find flocking after the flag to the maneuvers in 1788 commanded (in, poor man, his limited capacity) by the Maréchal de Broglie, maneuvers memorable for the long mess-table presided over by the Lady Marshal of Beauvau.

But above all the conjugal tie owed its weakening to certain ideas peculiar to the eighteenth century, to the remarkable prejudices then reigning and dictating the *modus vivendi* of its unions. Married love is regarded as uncouth, a barbarism and infirmity unworthy of the well-born; it is a plodding, middle-class, almost degrading happiness, a happiness for mean creatures, a low feeling, beneath the dignity of a great alliance and capable of compromising the reputation of high-born and house-broken breeders. More than anything else, from the license lurking in the air, the environing corruption, the barometric pressure of seduction, Marriage was bound to suffer from the reigning paradoxes, the theories of good breeding, which grow ever more and more brazen, ever more beautiful and witty, more charming, more alarmingly irresponsible and impudent, as the age matures and refines its vices. This is the spirit that begets between man and wife a chilly reserve, a glacial intimacy, manners that never extend beyond perfunctory politeness. Before long indifference is the only relief they afford each other. And unconcern becomes the man's only merit. It is his dignity, the solace of his heart, his pride. It sits smiling on the lips of a betrayed husband with an irony so light, such unforced levity, such cool self-possession, so natural an air, that he seems to be a mere spectator of his misfortune and to be lending his polite and tacit complicity to his wife's misconduct. He affects friendship for her lovers of the day, brotherhood with those of the day before; and in this total oblivion to his rights and his dignity, he achieves that famous phrase, so sublime in its cynicism and

presence of mind, which contains, for that day, all the philosophy and good grace of his rôle by confining the revenge of a man on surprising his wife to this unruffled reflection: "Dear lady, how rash! Had it been anyone but I . . .!"

A husband's honor becomes a form of masculine honor quite outmoded, fallen into discredit, a lost tradition, a faded sentiment. "I had clinched my dishonor, to put it plainly," says, bluntly, the Marquis of the *Dialogues d'un Petit-Maître*; and he propounds to the Chevalier the only decencies a man has a right to expect in such cases. A wife may "have someone"; there is no harm in such arrangements; no harm at all, except—notoriety. As long as everything runs smoothly, "with due regard to appearances, as long as the lady confines herself to such demonstrations in public as the world allows her to allow a lover," as long, in a word, as the accomplished fact is not openly avowed, why, what an ass would he be to make ado for what's done. Such is the new doctrine; an obliging creed, which relieves the man of all jealousy and the woman of all virtue, even that of a kept woman, leaving as the common duty of marriage only that of forbearance, the one bond of a union, whose sole continence is now the respect of the world! One day the husband says to his wife, or gives her to understand, that "the object of marriage, Madame, is happiness. We have not found it together. It would be idle, I fancy, to pretend longer a fidelity, which recommends itself to neither of us. Our fortune allows us to resume a liberty of which we made a rash mutual sacrifice. Live your own life, therefore, and I shall live mine . . ." ¹ And husband and wife take to living thus, each in his or her own establishment. To the middle classes they leave the tedium of meeting daily at bed and board, *in durance vile*; and, save for dinner, where they are rarely alone, they meet almost never and are no sooner out of sight than out of mind. There are no *resident* gentlemen, no husbands "tied to their wives"

¹Contes Moraux de Marmontel. Merlin. Vol. II.

apron-strings," now. The man spends six months in the Army, comes up to Paris: is Madame in town? on to Court; coming to Court? back to Paris; and very good married flesh they are too, if they spare a wife two months a year. On the wife's side, as well, there is a kind of vanity and display in this avoidance. "Ah, well! Flit now. I'll love the last of thee . . ." says a wife to a husband, who has been asking for a touch of familiarity. "Sir: I write you to-day, having nothing better to do. I conclude, having nothing further to say. Signed, Sassenage, right sorry to be Maugiron." This is the Comtesse de Maugiron's best to her husband. The husband is not curious, and the wife, even when virtuous, is not jealous. She concerns herself with the mistress, only when she detects her influence in the husband's attitude toward herself; provided she suits her, or shows her some attention, she will even go so far, should a new attachment threaten, as to judiciously shoo the interloper, through a third party, back to her marital duties.

This loose yoke, this mutual freedom in matrimony, this absolute tolerance, is not an idiosyncrasy of Marriage, it is its essence. There is no such thing any longer as a marriage without coadjutor. A lover is no dishonor, his choice alone compromises or exonerates. On this point you cannot do better than read a page written, as a kind of handbook of moral etiquette, by a woman. "The world asks, Has My Lady a Lover? Who is he? On the answer depends the reputation of a Lady. I repeat that, in the age in which we live, it is not our attachments that discredit us, but their object." This way of life is accepted everywhere. Adultery is always sure of impunity, complicity, and the smile of an understanding husband. It is viewed with indulgence, veiled by irony, even in her family, where her father replies to the lamentations of his son-in-law on the waywardness of his wife: "You are right. The girl behaves badly. I shall cut her off." Remember that at this time the world found nothing shocking in the sight of Monsieur Lambert de Thorigny shutting himself up with Madame de

Portail, who was stricken with small-pox, and dying under the roof of the Lord President of Parliament! It is as if the eighteenth century were illustrating an article of law in a fable of the time, which the chancellor of a mythical king reads to all the husbands in his realm: "Every man Jack of you shall keep a wife for the use of the next; and thus, God grant, order shall prevail, and Love's law be obeyed." And now, if you want the full measure of this code, listen to this. "Men speak of the good old days. In those days a betrayal raised the roof. It was beating, it was bolts and bars for a *Wife*. If the *Husband* made use of his own Liberty, his sad and faithful *Wife* was obliged to swallow her *Injury*, and chamber her *Grief* as in a dungeon dark. If she imitated her mate, it was at the risk of terrible perils. No less than *Life* was at stake, and that of her *Lover* as well. It was the Folly of that Age to link the Honor of a *Husband* to the Virtue of a *Wife*; and the *Husband*, who was no whit less of a *Gentleman*, if he sought his Pleasures elsewhere, became the ludicrous object of *Publick Contempt* at the first misstep of *My Lady*. Upon my Honor, I can not conceive how in those barbarous Ages men ever found Courage to marry. The bonds of Hymen were bonds indeed. To-day see what *Civility*, what *Liberty*, what *Peace* reign in the Family. If a Man and a Wife love one another, well and good, they live together, they are happy. When they love no longer, they say as much like honest Christians, and each takes back his *Bond*. They are *Lovers* no more; they are *Friends*. That I take to be true social Civility and refined Manners." ¹

To so many marriages dissolved, so to speak, by mutual tolerance, so many households separated by the spirit of the time, we must add all those marriages, the ties of which were broken and the breach introduced, apart from these causes, by reason of other social prejudices, by prejudices of caste: the marriages between money and name. A man of birth, in offering his hand to a daughter of finance, felt

¹ Contes Moraux de Marmontel. Vol. II. *La Bonne Mère*.

that he had payed and overpayed the debt. There his duty ended, his consideration too, in the contribution of his rank, the prostitution of his title; and he was exempt therefore from all that a husband owes his wife on the morrow, or even on the night, of his marriage, exempt from all proof of love or yet of respect. In this class of alliances of vanity elbowing into Court and misalliances of need wedding an "ingot of gold," it would often chance that the daughters of finance were treated as was the daughter of the millionaire Crozat by her husband, the Comte d'Evreux, who before his marriage could not scratch a match on credit and who, blazing overnight with a dowry of twelve hundred thousand pounds, worth, too, in prospect, his father-in-law's whole fortune (a cool twenty-two millions) would not so much as deign to touch Mademoiselle Crozat. Yet Mademoiselle Crozat was young, good-looking, well-made; and the Count her husband found her so. He would gladly have made her his mistress, but she was lowborn, and now, in his marital capacity, he felt for her, he said, nothing but disgust. This insulting disdain, to which some men added abuse impossible to repeat, the wife of the Comte d'Evreux avenged by giving him two children. The Count seems to have taken them somewhat amiss; he began parading the Duchesse de Lesdiguières, won several millions in speculation, and satisfied himself in turn by reimbursing his wife's dowry, reserving merely the interest in settlement of the honor of bearing his illustrious name.

Disdain did not always affect this princely insolence, however. It assumed a form less insulting in most of the men of high origin, who married daughters of farmers-general. But the poor little nobody, pronounced *gawky* on her presentation to society, though she was only modest, had to swallow many a sorry jest at her expense, many a whispered pleasantry which she overheard on its way to her husband and which her husband delighted in bringing home to her. Sometimes so many punishments sickened her, the world made her swallow its gall in such long, long draughts,

that she would take to hopeless flight and retire to her father's house. Matters did not always go so far; the husband would often make her life tolerable; but then he noticed her so rarely, cared so little for her person or her conduct, neglected her with such scant apology, betrayed her with such want of secrecy, that their life became one of quite exemplary wretchedness, conspicuous above all others for the peculiar shamelessness of their disunion.

Against this even background of tolerance and indifference, which is that of so many marriages, we see here and there, down the century, a sudden flare, a rare outbreak of violence. Smitten with jealousy, or rather wounded and shamed, far less in his honor than in his pride of name, by the meanness of his wife's tastes, the husband would sometimes wake like a thunderclap. It was the work of a moment to drag her from bed in the morning, rush her to a carriage escorted by four armed men, and commit her to the convent of the Good Shepherd, which was a kind of house of correction. But these splenetic exploits were not always the inspiration of the morning, the propagation of an unpurged hereafter; sometimes she was nipped at a brilliant supper, brutally torn from her pleasures like Madame de Stainville, who was so madly enamored of Clairval, and whom her husband had his people usher in all her splendor from a ball in rehearsal at the Duchesse de Mirepoix's; she was separated from her women, her trustiest hussy was sent to Sainte-Pélagie, and she herself was conducted to the Nuns of Saint Mary in Nancy, where she was left without a moot ginnea for a tip. The same summary methods were applied to the *présidente* Portail, to Madame de Vaubecourt, and to Madame d'Armesson. So too disappeared overnight, from a world full of light, sound and space, that Madame d'Hunolstein who, no sooner confined than converted, repented loftily, submitted to a perpetual fast, and wore nothing but sackcloth. During the Revolution, harbored by her husband, she begged to con-

tinue her life of penance, and died with her head in ashes and lees.

These abductions and confinements were the husband's right in the eighteenth century. With such penalties swift and severe was he provided. Amid all the laxities of custom and social condonement of scandal the law still left him his arms. A *lettre de cachet* sufficed; it was granted on proof of adultery, and it committed his wife, if he so chose, for the rest of her days. Sometimes he would have her sentenced for two years, a term during which, the penalty read, he might revisit and take her back. When those two years were run, however, if he had not claimed her, she was condemned to be shaven and confined for the rest of her life. Furthermore, she was declared dispossessed of her fortune, the revenue of which was adjudged to her husband, with the stipulation that he pay her an allowance of 1200 pounds a year. But this marital right, despite its occasional sudden and energetic exertion, was practically a dead letter for the society of that time; the husband, for the most part, let it slumber, and the wife evaded it usually by a voluntary separation, wheedled from him (*vide* Madame du Deffand) with an air so sad, so resigned, so apologetic, that he would make up his mind one evening to step aside forever.

With separation sanctioned by usage and so widely established in fact, voluntary separation, as a constantly growing practice, was bound to end in legal separation. That, of course, sounds the death-knell of conjugal fidelity in the eighteenth century. To a woman it commends itself as a final liberation from the husband, his presence, his surveillance, an absolute and lasting immunity from such jealous vagaries as ever and anon yet startle the even course of adultery. Legal separation is an immunity, a guarantee; it is more; it is in certain years of the period, a fashion, an exquisite aroma of exclusiveness. It becomes, for a woman, an invidious ambition, almost an obsession; and, out of a clear sky, on the most trifling pretext, the least

little scene, a man may hear his wife say: "The law! The law! I'll have the law on you . . . I mean it . . . I shall have back my *pactions* and reopen father's will . . . There!" The number of pleas becomes enormous; the Châtelet, the Audience Chamber of the Palais, and the Grand' Chambre are in a constant turmoil of scandalous debates, the wife winning her freedom by leaving her honor and her self-respect in the hands of the public. At one time as many as three hundred pleas accumulate on the Recorder's desk; and Parliament, alarmed, is forced, in order to stem the contagion, to peer closer at cause and effect and to post a few warning examples: Madame de Chambonas is found deserving of an even year of seclusion, on the lapse of which she may choose between the convent in perpetuity and her husband for his mortal term.

These many litigants enjoyed the use of convents especially devoted to their purpose, the *Précieux-Sang*, the *Conception*, the *Bon-Secours*, where decency required that they retire to await the verdict of the Court amid the diversions of those far from strict houses, gaming and singing and a groaning board. But of all the most popular, the chosen port of women in these straits, was the convent of Saint-Chaumont, the delectable asylum of those gleeful plaintiffs, who never referred other than refereefully to their husbands as "their adversaries"; where from cockcrow till ten at night, when the gates were closed, the droning of lawyers and their oratorical footfall drowned all other sounds: the motherward, this, of separation, where the assembled litigants loaned and borrowed lawyers, tips and strategy, all for one and one for all embracing their causes and laboring with as much zeal against the husband of another as against their own. Yet, for all its lights, the convent of Saint-Chaumont was not the rifest seed-bed of corruption: that distinction was reserved for the Courts, where the eloquent battles of Maître de Bonnières and Maître Gerbier were followed as free public lessons by a great throng of women, who came

there to learn how they should conduct themselves, when their turn came to appear before the fleecy footlights.

Widowhood, in the eighteenth century, is attended by a great pomp of regrets, which suggests an older day, an ancient rite surviving from an age of deep, severe, and holy mourning; its weeds are more afflicted than befit it, it is conspicuous for holy retreats and renunciations hardly compatible with the temper of the time. The widow's garb of woe, her dismal environment, that kind of burial extended to every familiar object, which seems to lead her eyes as well as her future toward the tomb of her husband, all this rigor of mortality was to be sure merely a traditional duty, but it remained a convention of the world. When the husband dies, pictures and mirrors and vanities, all the life and companionship of the walls, are veiled and shrouded. In her chamber a sable hanging covers the panels. Only at the end of the century are the walls a little relieved of their nightshade; only then the cult of the tomb relaxes its rigor and the widow's haunt is muffled, for the space of a year, in grey. The sad survivor swathes her head for life in a veil, which she wears on all occasions, even over her Court dress, unless she marries again; and, in woollen and black buried, she sits in her mournful rooms, waiting the visits of kindred and condolence. She is expected to live, thus for a time confined. The respect of the dress she wears forbids her the public promenade, and Widows' Walk is the only public place where she may appear.

In these hours of rueful epilogue, many women consoled themselves with plans for the future, visions of liberty and rapid oblivion. Life lurked in their tears, Anadymone was reborn in their brine, and many a mourning resembled the weeds of that widow in the *Illustres Françaises*, which hinted by a spade's length or more, under her petticoat of crêpe, at a garter of scarlet with a diamond clasp. But for others the mourning of the time was neither loud nor prod-

igal: it was ever less than the real mourning of their hearts. The bereaved of that day boast their fanatics, their recluses, their saints. There are extravagant and heroic despairs. There is the Maréchale de Müy, who tries to fling herself from the window and has to be forcibly restrained from suicide. There are widows who lose and annihilate themselves in meditative apathy, like the Maréchale d'Har-court, who shuts herself up in her rooms with a waxen image of her husband. There is the aged Marquise de Cavoix, who spends several hours a day communing with her husband's shade. And there are princesses, whose loss deprives them of all identity, who abjure the world and turn to God; who lose themselves in labors of charity and pass their days washing the feet of the poor, with a widow like Madame de Mailly.

CHAPTER VI

THE WOMAN OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

IN THE MIDDLE classes a daughter lives with her mother. Hour after hour she is with her, under her heart, her hand, her guidance. Her mother nurses and rears her, leading her really by the hand from infancy to youth. Charadin,¹ who knows the *bourgeoisie*, shows us over and over his little maid, at the side of her devoted and laborious mother, a reliable little soul, simple and understanding, as she grows under the shadow, as it were, of the domestic virtues. She is no little "fluff-ball." Look at her: a plump little headpad, square and snug, a short-sleeved bodice, a skirt and apron with a homely frill; and for playthings she needs but a drum, a pinwheel, a racket and skittles, the toys of the sidewalk and the populace. Her mother is her only governess. Her mother educates her, in a home which reflects her in its order and comfort, where everything bespeaks the neatness and substantial weal of middle class happiness: the massive furniture, the well-scrubbed floor, the large arm-chairs poised on rounded feet, the walnut cupboard with a bottle of *cassis* on the shelf, where the almanacks of years long flown slumber, nursing their births and deaths, hoarding the whole family history. Her mother it is who makes her fold her hands, before she passes the soup, which little Miss Manners, from her low stool, sees steaming in its pewter bowl, in deep-drawn fumes of grace. Her mother it is who, halting the skein and leaving the whirring wheel and spindle on the table, does up her hair before the mirror and, flicking a bow on her forehead, turns

¹ See the *Bénédictine*, the *Toilette du Matin*, the *Bonne Education*, the *Maitresse d'école*, the *Mère laborieuse*, etc.

her out in Sunday bib and tucker. She it is who makes her recite her catechism and lessons; and if ever she does trust a proxy, it is an older sister, who mothers the little girl for an hour. Here, in these hard-working families, the young are not alienated from their mothers by the claims and pleasures of the world: boy or girl, they are a help and company and a courage the more in the house. A mother, here, has no false pride: she loves her own, and loves her with a good hard hug. Besides, for a middle-class mother, her children have cost her less than other women: she has no pleasures to forego, no life to curtail to give "breath to those urgent little beggars." Accustomed as they are to domestic life, for these women childbearing is no sacrifice, and the rôle of mother, far from being a burden, is rather a duty which rewards them for the performance of their other duties. The daughters of the middle class, therefore, are attached to their mothers. Bashful and reserved, they wear a dress that is sober even when fancy, where thrift is not above practising a revamping of the neckerchief; they grow, wearing on their skirts a woman's tools of toil, scissors and pin-cushion, the emblems of her trade. Full of the joy of their years, healthy and strong, they grow at the knees of a mother, who narrows the gulf between them by the tender familiarity of her *tutoiement*. At the age of seven, the child has reached the years of reason, or rather her parents like to pretend so, hoping to improve her behavior by giving her a higher idea of her little person and a precocious sense of dignity. Her mother, to punish her, addresses her as *Mademoiselle*, and the child comes to learn that there are certain words in a mother's mouth harder to bear than a switch in her hand. Now she is trusted on a visit to her grandparents or for a walk in the afternoon; and she is sent to catechism class to prepare for confirmation.

Every Sunday, in some church-corner, chapel, or charnel-house, some retired spot vaulted with columned aisles, the little girl was marched to her seat on one of those long wooden forms, where the little chicks rubbed noses, the

older ones fluttered their fans, and the tiniest sat cackling and ducking behind the first row, giggling ever so slyly ear to ear. At the end of the passage between the forms sat an old priest in a large wooden chair, fingering his spectacles, and leaving to a nice little clerk at his side the duty of conducting, with unctuous gestures, under the eyes of the mothers and the parish cronies, the lesson; he it was who questioned the little Christians and made them repeat one by one the gospel of the day, the epistle, the orison, and the chapter of catechism allotted from the preceding Sunday. Sometimes the curate would come, and for him they would scramble to their feet. He would examine the smartest and withdraw amid the curtsies of the mothers, each preening herself on the amazing answers of her offspring.

But a time would come, maugre the day, maugre the hour, when, jealous as they might be of their daughters' education, these mothers too would have to yield to custom and send them to a convent to complete their religious instruction and polish their manners with the sisters. When the little girl had passed step by step through her catechism, she was placed in a convent, usually about her eleventh year, for twelve months, to prepare for confirmation, which at that time preceded communion, by a series of final exercises in piety. After a round-robin visit to her family, she entered one of these religious houses and passed, not without tears, the threshold of the nunnery.

They were quiet houses, these, to which the *bourgeoisie* sent its daughters, lowly schools, in one room of which the sisters gave instruction free to the children of the poor, modest communities usually relegated to some outlying quarter, where the keep cost from 250 to 350 pounds a year: the *Abbaye des Cordeliers* in the rue de l'Ourcine, the *Maison Saint-Magloire* in the rue Saint-Denis, the *Chanoinesses de Saint-Augustin* in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the *Dames Fille-Dieu* near the Porte Saint-Denis, the *Bénédictines du Saint-Sacrement* in the rue Cassette, the *Religieuses de la Croix* in the rue de Charonne, the *Filles de la*

Sainte-Croix, the *Filles de la Saint-Croix-Saint-Gervais*, the *Dames Annonciades de Popincourt*, the *Religieuses de la Congrégation Notre-Dame*, the *Congrégation Saint-Aure* in the rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, where Madame du Barry was brought up. Although they followed the fashion of the day and offered the young girl music, dancing and social graces, taught at that time even in purely charitable institutions, these houses had none of the pomp and vanity of those where the daughters of the nobility ate out their hearts in impatience for society. In these religious dovecots of the *bourgeoisie* there was nothing but silence, mildness and peace; they were as far removed from the stress of the world as they were from the din and stir of the Paris streets. The child soon succumbed to their charm; petted by the sisters, soon befriended by her companions, and seated at the long table, she thought herself very happy indeed. A new serenity wooed her in that ordered life, in that calming discipline, in the likeness of all she saw and heard to that long shadowy alley of lime-trees, where she strolled at recreation with a friend of her choice. Nothing suggested the world: she had no means of knowing it. Mass every morning, meditation every day, and lessons in the parlor with a dancing-master brought her around, happily enough, to her Sundays, when her parents came to take her walking. In that far from forbidding solitude, in a confinement so pleasant, her imagination kindled her piety. Her budding emotions turned toward God and welled to Him in secret effusions. And the holy days, the spectacle of a taking of the veil, all the pageantry of convent-life, led her at last to communion, trembling, thrilled and inflamed.

This period in a nunnery affected the soul of the young *bourgeoise* profoundly. The woman of the middle classes remembered it all her life as a kind of hushed, hallowing shadow; and from it she drew a habit of self-control, a fund of piety, a certain strictness of faith, which, roused later by the debates of the age, inflamed her dogmatically and

led her to bigotry. In her zeal there was something innately unbending, an instinctive need of dogma, which inclined her toward Jansenism. She was its mainstay; and it was in her that Jansenism found the fervor and zeal of those daughters of the famous restaurateur Cheret, who, in 1758, set up a small chapel of choplogic of their own, which flourished in the teeth of the curate of Saint-Séverin.

The mothers of the lower middle classes, who needed the help of their daughters at home, rarely left them, after twelve, in the convent or in one of those *bourgeois* boarding-schools, which devoted five years to reading, writing, reckoning, sewing, embroidery and knitting. As soon as she was *a bit big*, she was brought home. And there the education she received partook of the nature of that intermediate rank, which the *bourgeoisie* occupied in society. Born into a class fluid and ill-defined, which bordered on the people by its labor and on the aristocracy by its ease, the young girl was trained both for the duties of domestic life and for the pleasures of society. She was given an education half popular, half worldly, which brought everything within her reach and left nothing below her dignity, making her the living image of her class, facing two ways and endeavoring to link the duties of the lower to the privileges of the higher. Her life was divided: one half being devoted to the acquirement of all the arts and graces of her sex, the other to the manual labor, the chores, the drudgery of a servant: a peculiar contrast, which made her pass daily and often several times a day from the rôle of an accomplished lady to that of a Cinderella. One master brought another; after the master of penmanship came the globe-spinner; after him the music-master; and then the dancing-master, hired for thirty *sous* a month even by mechanics, then came the dancing-master, with his *fiddle, fiddle, fiddle-dedee* tucked under his chin, to teach her Court curtsies. But all these ornaments of her leisure were like the girl's fine clothes, her elegant, even expensive attire, which raised her on holidays above her station: she would drop the one



CHARDIN—*Le Bénédicité*

and the other to take her homespun hood and follow her mother to market. From these delightful studies she would slip to buy, around the corner, a nip of parsley or a head of salad; and, with all these drawing-room graces, her parents saw to it that she kept the habit of going to the kitchen to make an omelette, to splice the vegetables or skim the pot. A hard, practical, gross foundation, and a finish easy, worldly and ingratiating—such was the two-fold nature of the education of these girls, whom we might describe as having been brought up by the *bourgeoisie* with the sound sense of Molière, and by the eighteenth century with the grace of Madame de Pompadour.

Her life resembled her education in more points than one. Essentially simple and self-centered, that life, limited as it seems, yet held many an outlet and release. Harnessed to the humdrum regularity of a laborious existence, it moved, clock-wise, in the habitual daily groove of the family circle, three or four relatives, about the same number of friends and neighborhood acquaintances; but in that round she was not strictly confined. The young girl lived her life in solitude; but she was, in the words of one of her class, "on the confines of the world." The *bourgeoisie*, that Third Estate of the apt and the able, was endowed by its many trades, the radiation of its affairs, by all that it handled and approached, with too great a power of expansion, too active and ascending an energy, for its daughters to remain on that confine without crossing it. Time and again, the young *bourgeoise* would try the secret door, behind which she heard the hum of the *salons*, their echoing life, the pleasures of wealth and leisure. She brushed, as she passed, the skirts of her betters, and noted their cut and their carriage. She tasted the pleasures of the world. And though she never went to the Opera before she was twenty, the private theatricals so extensively cultivated among the middle classes brought her their rapture and thrill, the exhilaration of comedy, the agony of passion, and led her often to the discovery of masterpieces. Besides, where was

the middle class family that did not boast, somewhere, somehow, a first or second hand acquaintance with that magical world of the theater? Knock at the door of a sober, self-respecting home like that of the hard-working Willes: you will find Carlin there. A taste for the theater, a touch of art, coming from a class closely akin to art, a sympathy for literature, were the letters patent of the least little *bourgeoise* whom we meet leading her daughters to the latest exhibition of painting. And everywhere in that society infatuated with polite pleasures, how many assemblies lie open to a young girl with a mother—concerts at Madame Lepine's, receptions at Monsieur Vase's, where she too may have her part of the delicate pleasures of her day, note all unnoted so many points of view, so many didoes of the great, listen to such eloquent talents, see so many known faces, elbow such ducky little *abbés* and gray gallants and green "featherbrains"—forget, in a word, for an hour or two that she was not born a *demoiselle*!

Yet these were but accidents—lambent illuminations of her life. The days are few and far between that release her from her sphere, exalt her for a moment, open a window on the world, and give her a taste for the enlightened recreations of her time, the appreciation of its arts, wit and elegant fashions. Her other days she spends in the dim, familiar home, in the monotony of tried pastimes and stated pleasures, shut up for long hours, going out little. And when she does go out, it is to the traditional promenade, to those time-honored gardens, where the daughters follow their mothers in the footprints of their grandmothers; gardens like the Park of the Arsenal, the King's Gardens, and that garden of the good old days where women still sit and knit, the Luxembourg, so favorable to reveries, where a girl finds solace in the shiver of the leaves in the wind. Sometimes, though, we give Paris the go-by: we are sick of the uniform hedges of the Bois and the decorations of Bellevue; good-day and good-bye to you, we are off to the country; and a good long day in the open under a wide

sky, amid the tall timber of real woods, gives girls like these, so fresh and unspoiled, so heart-whole and susceptible, delights like the gossamer veil donned by little Phlipon for her outing to Meudon, delights that soothe their brows and ripple all around them on a wandering air. In Nature the artisan's daughter finds sensations and revelations that she alone knows, thrills denied her high-born sister bred by the world for the world in an atmosphere vitiated by prejudice, pretense, and *anti-naturalism*. Her heart swells with a vague longing to admire and revere. Solitary pools, shady nooks where she gathers a rare, shining orchid, idle hours in a clearing lying long on the leaves—in these she finds, as one of them said, “the charms of an earthly paradise.”

“Fair weather to-morrow, and where shall we go?” There's a bid to rally a family on Saturday evening in summer. And if Saturday's child will have neither Meudon nor Villebonne, why, there is always the pré Saint-Gervais for a picnic on the green, to “split a leg o' lamb,” and her sides, with a friend or two; or else Saint-Cloud, the usual bourn of Sunday trippers. The fountains are playing, there will be plenty of people; so in the morning we are off in a ferry for eight, that lies moored to the quay, awaiting its complement. As well it may, as well it may. For the maid, risen at five, is dressed, bless her, in a whimsy and posies and a fond father's arm, and if she is not fair, what is? Trade is at her heels, lad, as she takes a hand and holds it eight ways in one, look, before she leaps. So on our way; and as we float, we rub up an acquaintance, raise a lover maybe, look under the seat and over the side for a marriage. Or if not that day, no matter. He will turn up soon on her doorstep, of an evening, when she takes the air; or under the window, where she sits devoutly, her man-sized cheek in hand; or on the Ramparts, where she runs rampant, singing and laughing, with a band of friends. One way or another, to-day or to-morrow, God will be good to her; if not sooner, at the *Eight Days o' God's grace*, when He

must show cause why all these *bourgeois* lads and lasses are met to praise him—the heyday this, of lovers and wooers. Or, if by now she is not bestowed on her kindred or acquaintances, she still has Carnival to poke around among those beviés of masks, who have a right immemorial at this season to the hospitality of the quarter.

These encounters, thanks to the easy-going conventions of middle-class manners and the habit of the parents of letting a girl, once she was grown, take her cloak and run the streets, on any likely pretext, in search of adventure, took the place, for this young marriageable, of the match-making opportunities of society. The dangers of so informal a method of husband-hunting need no detailing. Followed by some young blood, she would keep a tryst in some dark church, and one night her home would see her no more. Still, the number of those who succumbed to seduction was small; among those who yielded to love and impulse, the majority were lured by false representations. In surrendering to a lover, they believed they were confiding their honor to a husband. They were hoodwinked by a union, a simulated marriage, by one of those provisional marriages consecrated by traditions of long standing and the indulgence of the Church. Common at the beginning of the century were those liens exchanged between the betrothed and often written and signed with their blood—love was partial to such testimonials at the time—and they trusted them implicitly; for had their like not been laid at the dancers' feet at the Queen's own ball?

Among these young girls there were some so credulous or easy, so simple-minded or imprudent, that they considered themselves married by attending Mass with a man. "I take you for my husband," they would say, holding his hand at the elevation of the Host. To which the youth in antiphony, with a hand as warm: "I swear by all I hold sacred and holy never to have other wife than you." Some few, more punctilious, feeling the need of more formal under-

takings, required and obtained a secret marriage—there was a vogue for secrecy at the time, even at Court. Thus they safeguarded their religious scruples and their frailty, as they thought; appeased parental ire; and bound the man by a bond, which they hoped later, with the aid of Time and Providence, to publish. This rite, which amply salved their conscience, for they were sincere in pledging the vow of a lifetime, was not a farcical union celebrated by a lackey disguised as a priest; it was a true marriage consecrated by the only legal rite of the time, the blessing and approval of the Church. The lovers unearthed some impecunious priest, usually a Norman, Normandy being renowned for the poverty and easiness of its brethren. The fee and also the affection of the young couple were sure to touch the good fellow; and he would consent to marry them, certificate and all, on condition that they drew up, at his dictation, a mutual agreement to rectify this first rite by a new ceremony, when they were no longer bound to secrecy. Both promises had to be signed by the lovers, the priest, and witnesses. In addition, the groom's had to be signed with his seal and inscribed on the envelope with a statement by two notaries that the contents represented the contracting party's free and unforced desires. The night before the marriage, after a holy session, confession was administered. The lovers laid their hands in the priest's and swore to hold true the sacrament he would celebrate; and appointment was taken for the morning. Then, in some unfrequented chapel in a remote parish, behind a closed *grille* opened after a public service, the priest sang the marriage mass. At the church-door husband and wife handed him their pledges signed and dated, certified by four witnesses, and attested by act of notary. But by this ceremony the woman was married only before God; and she had no protection beyond an oath and a promise. Small wonder then that many husbands yielded in time to inconstancy, the representations of their family, or the inducements of a rich marriage, tore up their bond like a page of frail romance,

and left to her shame the woman they had thought, or merely professed, to love.

More often, however, the suitor, wherever or however found, at the promenade, the church, or the ball—these were the three places responsible for most middle-class marriages—the suitor would come knocking at her door. He had asked leave at one of their meetings, probably the first, to call. He is received; and after a game of *mouche*, he is allowed to return. And so the courtship goes on under the parents' eyes. Love it is and not tongue-tied, love in the legitimate intimacy of those innocent games to which the young girl brings such childlike laughter, the high spirits of her season—those startled and withal reassuring little squeaks that mark the happy hide-and-seek of a game called *cligne-musette!* But best of all is a game of barter, where the forfeit for a girl, unless she minds, is a kiss, and every lad's loss goes to swell a common fund in honor of Saint Martin's Day. Come Saint Martin's Day, the evening proves so delightful, that straightway they must play again for funds to trip it to Twelfth Night, and midnight mass, and a good supper to wind away with and a little dance on the holy day. Then come New Year and its gifts; and the beau brings a pair of Hours and gloves. Till time is ripe. For, despite the readiness with which the wooer is welcomed and given every occasion to press his suit, marriage, in the middle classes, is never concluded so promptly, with such unceremonious prestidigitation, as among the aristocracy. Strange as it may seem, in this toiling class, the requirements and even the advantages of fortune are not the deciding factors in marriage. Before the pact could be closed, there had to be some sign of love or at least of a dawning inclination on the part of the girl; and, girl-like, she was not averse to seeing her lad play the assiduous Celandon. Suitor, suitor, will you suit me? His character, his personality, are scanned, weighed, and dissected far more closely in the *bourgeoisie* than elsewhere. For here the young girl, being less dissipated and more tender-hearted,

more sheltered from disillusioning examples and hardening ambitions, expects to find, if not a lover, at least a man whom she can love. And as in her own family she is a free agent, whose consent her parents would never have dared to force; as, in this weighty matter of marriage, she is left almost always complete mistress of her choice, she is not unwilling to test and draw out and draw on the *Monsieur*, whose letter of proposal her father had showed her. So, in cambric gown, with unpowdered hair, bonneted in a large loose *baigneuse*, she fiddles with the leading strings; and it is only after a long series of visits and a hard-pressed suit that she lets him buy on the *Quai des Orfèvres* her locket and ring.

What wonder? Who will exclaim at such caution, such delays and trials, at a meditation which sometimes degenerates into aversion? It is the responsibility of a lifetime, the toil, the burdens and the bondage of a home, that the young girl is assuming with this contract. All touch with the world, insofar as her life knew the world, all freedom, all fecklessness, all peace and little pleasures, she must now forego. In fact, here, marriage is the reverse of what it is higher up: a bond instead of a release: duties instead of rights: the world foregone, not won. *Finis*, her bright, delightful, carefree days; whereas, up yonder, marriage is the first free step, the life-giving principle. Without counting all the gloomy attributes it evokes in her mind, marriage for the young *bourgeoise* is formidable by reason of the gravity of its vows. The man and wife who are to live together in the *bourgeoisie* are really called on to live together. There are no decent escapes, no convenient separations; marriage is literally the union of two lives and two fortunes. For an aristocrat, what is at stake? Her happiness. But for a *bourgeoise* there is something more. In taking a husband, she must take a man who may be trusted not to compromise their fortune and endanger the bread of her children. A vice or two, higher up, occasion a little irregularity: but here they precipitate poverty. Her

choice, then, is a grave one: on it rest the whole future and fortune of a family. To so many considerations which give her pause and make her pensive and undecided before this major engagement of her life must be added a final one: she has seen how her parents live, she has seen, in her class, that the husband still retains the authority of man over woman. He is not the man the Court and nobility show her, who makes his wife his equal, who gives her her way to keep his own, and leaves her full command of the home. No. In her caste, she knows, other traditions obtain; and to take a husband is to take a master.

The woman of the middle class is the model, the living image of the diversity of pursuit, fortune and even of station, which divides the *bourgeoisie* into so many degrees, leaving so wide a distance between the top and bottom of this median order, which embraces the whole State. In the class which represents, with the upper financial set, the crust of the *bourgeoisie*, in the higher magistracy, women affect an air of primness and formality, a physical carriage and a moral bearing, in which dignity easily turns to stiffness and virtue to intolerance. In these women duty takes the place of the heart. As mothers, they wield their motherhood, do these magisterial matrons, as a code of justice: no impulsiveness, no indulgence for all those little failings, so readily forgiven in a daughter and of which a woman so often makes a credit and a charm. Stiff and erect, still handsome, but handsome by the book, with a serious, almost sullen kind of beauty, a face surly and unresponsive, a costume neat and sober, the leaf turned down, the ribbon in place, the arm at rest and a long slender hand lying on a book of piety, we see them in a plate by Coypel, where he shows us a mother minding a child who sits, with downcast eye and heavy heart, working sadly.¹

¹ *L'Education sèche et rebutante*, painted by Charles Coypel, engraved by Desplaces.

Pride; barrenness; rigidity:¹ they fade, however, as the Robe dwindles and counts its buttons down to the procurors' wives and the better-a-notary's-than-none. They disappear altogether in the wives of solicitors, greased as they are by the clients they receive, by the titled folk who sometimes solicit them, and softened by the breath of the world that airs the house. In contrast to the Robe, and at its heels, the wives and daughters of artists form a class, who flaunt a free speed, spirit, independence, a roving assurance, the tastes and airs of young males; a breezy, pleasure-loving lot. Then comes the great body-politic of middle-class femininity, the tradeswomen, women infinitely adroit, attractive, and gifted in that persuasive Parisian knack of selling, inimitable in the farce of bargain and sacrifice, armed to the teeth with irresistible babble and cajolery, thanks to which, in the words of the day, "they numb your sense to sleep like a surgeon who, before carving, runs his hand over your arm to numb it."

And in their dealings with upper class clients, what coquetry do they not acquire? Manners, polish, mummery: what escapes them? Most charming of all the *bourgeoises*, they outdo even the great ladies by their abandon, their absence of fastidiousness and overdressing, by the voluptuousness, which lies like a *sachet* between silk and skin. Only in them does the eighteenth century find that flexible grace which it calls *le moelleux* (*lusciousness, blandness*).

Now, leaving these lovely little milliners to their dealings, let us drop in at the other end of this world of the yardstick, at the bottom of the *bourgeoisie*. Here lives a woman sketched from life by Marivaux, Madame Dutour, the linen-dealer, a meal of a woman, a big hearty busybody, jolly as the day is long; life-loving; loving, above all, her

¹ Here is a portrait of the *bourgeoise* from the *Bijoux indiscrets*. "I saw city women whom I found close, vain of their beauty, all mounted to the tune of honor, and dogged wherever they went by churlish and surly husbands or by divers rascally cousins, who made sheep's eyes all day at their fair cousins, coming in at all hours, deranging their *rendez-vous*, and standing in on the conversation."

fingers to suck and ply, and seeing no reason why she should not have two birthdays a year rather than one; or her maid either, good bluff buxom outspoken Toinon, whose salvos of welcome, however they impress the custom, bring her shop about her ears. And, with her Sunday shawl on her back, she will give you a taste of her tongue, *bawl out* anything on heels or wheels; give the world to know who she is, Madame Dutour, that's who; for if people are to respect you, you must speak up, and the angrier you grow, the more quality you show. Her heart is in the right place, if it does come cheap: an ear for all your troubles, and her nose in her handkerchief over nothing—and where will you match her? Madame Dutour is worth her weight in gold. Ah, but, you see, that she knows: under her tears lurks the busy bee. And that eye full of brine takes in everything worth taking, doubles by the neatest transaction her profit by her sympathy, her sympathy by her profit; nor is she ever at a loss to lend with one hand and clinch with the other.¹

Of the same tribe and almost the same brood is Madame Pichon, from a novel by Duclos, who sounds like a daughter of Madame Dutour: a young thing and a pretty, always in demand at all the suppers in the quarter, always game for a partner, a song and a joke, lively to the point of boisterousness, jolly and loud, more high-hearted than fine-hearted, and holding the lead at the longest supper without ever losing her head.

The middle classes are outgrowing rapidly the days when they rubbed their hands gleefully, on Twelfth Night or Saint Martin's Day, over the lingering display of a duck or a goose at the door; the days when they dressed their womenfolk in the cast-off finery of the quality, in those bargains, dainty but out of date, which the most elegant *bourgeoises* bought at the fair of the Holy Ghost held every Monday in the Place de la Grève.

Already, at the outset of the century, the author of the *Illustres Françaises* rises to protest against the pretensions

¹Marivaux. *La Vie de Marianne*.

and uppishness of middle-class vanity, against that new-fangled name, that attribute of noble ladies, *Madame*, exchanged by the wives of secretaries, notaries, procurors, and tradesmen in easy circumstances. Little by little the language, the airs, the ostentation of the nobility seep down through the *bourgeoisie* from first to last. Soon there is nothing strange in hearing a servant called by her mistress, plaintively, as she is waiting to sit down to table: "Ah, Lud! Where is *Mademoiselle*? Tell her we are waiting to eat." It is no such matter now though the *bourgeoise* assume the manner of the world: has she not already all its tastes and elegance? She ruins herself for her clothes.¹ She puts a year's revenue on her wedding gown. And the good burgher Hardy is alone in being scandalized at the items of the royal *trousseau* of Mademoiselle Jouanne, which he records, he says, as an example of the luxury of the middle classes. The *bourgeoises* think nothing of wearing Court mourning; though Héluvetius dare not wear black for a prince, whose relative he is by marriage. Every day brings a new climb, a new sop to vanity, a new usurpation. At the end of the century it is difficult to distinguish the *bourgeoise* from the great lady. She has the same hair-dresser, the same tailor, the same midwife. What remains of the frugal *bourgeois* life of old? its rollicking weddings? the good cheer of its feasts? the intimacy of its homes? Everywhere the custom prevails now of separate beds, which once meant a quarrel, rupture, an imminent suit for separation. Where is the frugal home known to Marivaux? Madame has her fire, Monsieur has his. The Councillors' Ladies of the Châtelet, the Councillors' Ladies of the Supreme Court, wear diamonds. They can no longer dress themselves: they must have a woman. Yesterday those

¹Rétif de la Bretonne, in his *Mariées de Paris*, says that he knew a baker's daughter in the rue Saint-Jacques, who brought the mercer, her husband, fifteen thousand pounds, eight of which she spent on dresses and jewelry. He goes on to say that in the rue Saint-Honoré he met the bride-to-be of a jeweler, who raised for her adornment twenty thousand pounds on her husband's fortune, alleging that his profession required her to shine; she went to the altar blazing with diamonds. (*Les Parisiennes*. Vol. II.)

arms of theirs, which looked so long, wagged not like clappers in chimes of lace; and to-day they change their gowns, like any duchess, three times a day. Gone are the days of Madame's little card-parties with a few long-haired lawyers; now we have music and a supper. She sups out, homes at two in the morning, and holds audience in bed. No palavers now, never a parley with the cook, to build up the bill and filch from her husband a few extra *louis* for frills and fancies: she sends out invitations and orders, makes her purchases and sends her goodman the bill. With her servants she has lost all touch; none of those scoldings, those half-vexed, half-chuckling mutterings of the *bourgeoise* of yore, haranguing the air on the cost of life, all for a splashed gown or a pair of shoes that dropped six pounds in the muds of Paris. Her reprimands are not softened by a familiar, comforting *my lass*, formerly the penitent period of the diatribe. The *bourgeoise* is above such things. She reads novels; passes on them; finds them superb or horrible; and sends her daughter to the convent to forget her. Ranks, manners, customs have become indistinguishable—you have only to look at those ladies on their way to Mass, followed by a lackey with a large morocco prayer-book: they are shop-keepers from the rue Saint-Honoré, and their men are church-wardens in a parish, where only the mice have the grace yet to be poor.

Despite everything, however, there is, in the *bourgeoisie* of the eighteenth century a robustness of health that resists all the corrupting influences of fashion. The virtues of the home, the family and marriage, take refuge in this middle order of the State and flourish there. Allowing for a certain number of tradeswomen, whose husbands encourage them often in their flirtations to promote their custom, the ladies of the city, to adopt the language of the time, "are mounted to the tune of honor." In a middle class marriage, which is so weighty an undertaking, where

everything, even happiness, is serious, adultery is rare. And when it does show its heels, it is not in a fling or a fancy. It shows them in flight, in a heedless flight of passion uncontrolled, or rather a frailty overborne and ravished; and if for a moment they stifle their shame, these women lapse, after that fleeting instant of pleasure, into a long future of remorse. Adultery, you see, robs the *bourgeoise* not of what the great lady calls by the high-sounding term of *honor*, but of what plain people call plain *honesty*. These honest women, then, reared in a code of strict decency, accustomed from childhood to duty, pious in a plodding, unquestioning way, succumb with a kind of self-loathing. Failing to resist temptation, they resist their fault even in committing it. There are tears of terror and shame in the reluctant kisses wrung from their love; their hearts are broken by submission. The charm that enraptures them leaves them, afterwards, the beclouded foreboding of a slow and mortal poison, and at their last interviews, exhausted and already cold, they have to force themselves to comply. Under the livid stigma they slowly pine, sick with remorse, and pine unto death. That slow decline sometimes furtively hugs a memory, like a long faded locket. And of grief they die, of grief and love and remorse, breathing forgiveness with their last breath.

Thus lives and dies the wife of the glazier of the rue Saint-Honoré, *Madame Michelin*, the blond eighteen year old mistress of Richelieu. The overture is a habit, at first, of looking every morning at Mass, in Saint Paul's, for a stranger, who gave her cause to forget and remember her mirror. Then, a blush at a banal compliment brings him home, and before she knows it Richelieu is ordering mirrors of her husband. In a flash the scene changes: she finds herself in his house, lured by a feigned letter from a Duchess, eye to eye with the man she loves but loves as yet quite innocently and, as she says, "without a thought of harm." Then all blurrs: the day dims, and all the days thereafter, with tears, tears only dried by the delight of

addressing as *Monsieur le Duc* the lover, who plays so recklessly and unfeelingly with her scruples, her pain, her struggling innocence! The poor little *bourgeoise* begins to droop. Richelieu notices it. She tries to deny it; but in the midst of pleasure a sigh escapes her: "Ah, I am wretched, so wretched!" And, with a last kiss on his hand, she leaves him forever, she leaves him to die.—Some time later, Richelieu's coach jostles a man in deep mourning. It is Michelin: he had buried his wife two days before. Richelieu has him step in to hear his story.

She is the gentlest, perhaps, and most appealing figure of her day, this tender and loving little *bourgeoise*, who leaves her sigh in the byways, her penance in that sigh, and her passing in a prayer. She leads those veiled shades, who linger here and there, down the century, among the yellowing leaves of scandalous *mémoires*, which they illumine and redeem for a moment with the modesty of their love. In those faded pastures appears yet another, *Madame Parangon*, a sullied lily, drooping, but drooping how loftily! What purity, what freshness, what smiling kindness in her care of the little apprentice, Rétif! She mothers him, has him dine at her table, relieves him of his duties, finds him home-keeping ones, gives him plays to read; and the scene grows persuasive when, leaning over his chair and brushing his cheek, she makes him read *Zaïre*, scanning the verses herself with the odalisque lilt of Gaussin's inflection and her own measured breath in his hair! Till at last, fearful of herself or of him—she may have seen him one evening kiss the *respectueuse* she sent him to leave in her room—she thinks it high time to marry him. He must be healthy and wealthy and wise, and his wife must be pretty, and she suggests her sister. With drooping eyes, she gives him flutteringly his first lessons in the world. Sometimes, when she comes in on a cold cold day, he runs to slip off her shoes. "What a child you are, to be sure . . ." she murmurs; and smiles bravely like a sister. Then comes the day of Rétif's burst of violence, when she runs from the room laughing

and crying, feverish, mad! When she recovers, her virtue forgives but refuses to yield; her heart forgets, but her dignity, her modesty, her shame forbid the boy further trespass, even the thought of desire. She vows to feel, and does feel, nothing but the blameless affection of a mother. She gives him a watch as a wedding gift, which he pins on her sister: she joins their hands before her father's portrait. And when Rétif turns his back on the house of Parangon, he sees, over his shoulder, something so white in the wind, that the door seems to be shrouded in infant mourning: it is Madame Parangon who steals a last look at her darling and goes indoors to die.¹

¹*M. Nicolas, ou le Cœur humain dévoilé*, published by himself and printed in his own house. 1779. Parts I to VI.

CHAPTER VII

THE WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE—THE FILLE GALANTE

WHEN WE DESCEND from the pictures of Chardin to the scenes of Jeurat, from the *Illustres Françaises* to the *Bals de Bois*, the *Fêtes Roulantes*, the *Ecosaisies*, the *Histoire de Monsieur Guillaume le Cocher*, to all the racy pictures, all the crass paintings of the street, or to the sketches so sharp in accent and so rich in verve, jotted by Caylus on the back of a poem by Vadé—we discover below the petty bourgeoisie, at the very bottom of this society, and as though outside the eighteenth century, a woman who seems of a race other than the women of her age. In the rude trades of Paris; in traffics carried on in the teeth of the wind, amid such hard labor as forces the limbs of woman to the work of man; from the market-woman of the Halles to the miserable creature who cries her load of wood all day at the Quai Saint-Bernard, we meet a being who is woman only by virtue of her sex, and who is less a woman than a clod. Bouchardon in his *Cries of Paris* has captured her strong figure, her mannish silhouette; his powerful drawings reveal the virile grossness, the masculinity of all these women of burden, under their stout, stiff woollens and fustian.¹

¹ In his *Mélanges Militaires et Sentimentaires*, the Prince de Ligne says that the women of the populace of Paris were the terror of foreigners; and among these women, he cites particularly the fishwives, for whose scolding the police at the time entertained a kind of tolerance. Their first place, jointly with the charcoal-burners, in the corporations of the populace, was to them a source of pride, always somewhat kindled by a *topette de sacré chien* (bottle of rot-gut). It was loosed in an endless flood of insult that respected no rank or power in society. The threats of a herring-woman to the Princess Palatine, mother of the Regent, at the time of the *agio* (speculations) of the Rue Quincampoix are well-known. "I eats no paper,

If we consult the age, morally as well as physically we find that the woman of the people is scarcely humanized. In the supreme civilization of the period, in the very center of intelligence and light, she is, according to the testimony of the author of the *Parisiennes*, a creature with a brain void of ideas as a Hottentot's, a creature wallowing in matter and in brutality, who draws her notion of government from the executions in the Place de Grève, her notion of public strength from the watch, her notion of justice from the Commissioner of Police, her notion of Christianity from nine turns around the shrine of good Sainte Geneviève. Only rarely is her heart illumined for a moment: tenderness, sorrow, pity, indignation pass through it like a swift pang. But these are but transient urges, for everything hardens the woman of the people against them: the rigors of her daily life, the tenor of her household where quarrels and fury flow in a lingo of abuse invented by that great corporation and popular caste, the Fishwives. Disputes, blows, and rioting rule her home. Her children grow amid this violence, which breaks over their heads in bruising showers. They grow in terror of a hand ever raised to strike; they are oppressed, curbed and forced back upon themselves without hope of freedom. In contradistinction to the children of the leisure classes, who mature too soon, they remain, as a contemporary has observed, children too long; their souls and their intelligence remain bound, prisoner under their coarse swaddling-clothes, that muslin cloth which served for all the infants of the poor, the *tavayolle* or chrison cloth in which they were carried, crying, to church! What darkness, what depths of ignorance we find in these girls, who often never learn how to read with the Sisters! And what finer example of ingenuous idiocy than the story of Lise, the model of

let your son take good care!" Throughout the century, these women cling to their rude nature, to their base habits, to their homely clothing; and, in 1783, three hundred fishwives awaited the exit from the church of Saint Eustache of a young bride of their class who had presumed to wear the curls and ribbons of the *bourgeoise*.

Houdou's bust of Folly? At the time of the town weddings, on the occasion of the marriage of the Comte d'Artois, she presented herself at the marriage-bureau. The clerk asked her if she had a lover: "I have not," she answered, in great surprise, "I thought the town provided everything."

These women of the populace seek consolation, moral force and physical resistance, forgetfulness of their troubles, forgetfulness of fatigue and of cold, they seek courage and patience, in the one fire which gives them animation, comfort and fever, in brandy—the *cau-de-vie* which women cry in the streets, calling it by that popular name of so terrible a significance: "*La vie! La vie! Life!*" Drunkenness is the great holiday and the only dream of this world. Sundays bring but the blessings of stupor. Family memories date from the raw marriage wine of some suburban public-house; family pleasures are contained in the pewter pitcher to which mothers, grown daughters and even children turn, on Sabbath or holiday, to quaff a coarse joy or to lap a pugnacious ebriety.

Then, when she has slept herself sober from the effects of Sunday, her life of labor begins again: the wretchedness of existence, of illness, of privations, of days without fire, of children without bread, an implacable, crushing existence, which, in the long run, brings the old women of the people to that hebetude of reason, of idea, of heart, of faculties, and of sentiment, which is so completely and vividly expressed in the regrets of one of them on the death of her "man," an invalid. "How is your husband?"—"Well, Monsieur, well, oh! very well. Poor dear man! 'a was buried yesterday. . . . 'Twas Thursday last a' says: 'I'm a-stiffing!'—'A-stiffin', are you, poor John?' I calls him poor John sometimes in sport-like. . . . 'Now what did I tell you? 'Tis your asthmas. Nay, come, bully John, come, fetch me a breath. . . . '—'I cannot.'—'You can too, an you will, but you will not, you willy-nilly ninny, you!' O God! O God! That ever I said it! For 'a could not, 'a was gripped-like with lead. I gives him to drink,



Carle Verast

1866 de Dreyfus

Marchande d'Eau de vie.

Qui veut boire la goutte?

a shriving-nip o' hyacinth, the surgeon gave me. Thirty-two penny it cost me, not a doit more nor less, not that I grudge it thee, poor sweet man; but it would not down. So, as I sees that, I says: 'John my man, shall I send for the priest?'—'As you will, wife.'—So I sends for the priest; and the poor man, the sweet man, 'a makes his confession. 'A was as clean as a child, there warn't no evil in him, no more'n a weanling. 'Well now, you see, friend John,' says I, when 'a was shrived, 'tis a precaution. Ye never can tell who's to go or who's to stay, can ye, lad? Don't harm none and don't help none, that's all I say.' They brings him the sacrament at ten o'clock. 'A was easy, droppin' off to sleep-like, I'd a-sworn. But a wee moment later: 'Wife! Wife!'—'Aye, aye, what would you?'—'God 'a mercy, I see the skillets skipping!'—them skillets 'twas, them skillets I kept on the wall across from his bed. Heaven help us! I runs and I calls the neighbors, and when I comes back, 'a was cold. Who'd ever a-thought it? 'A went off without so much as a rattle. 'A went off without show or sham, poor fool! And me now, all alone, no man more, no man! I knowed 'a was not with us for long. The day we moved out, that's Tuesday a sevensnight, four stools was all 'a could carry; and 'a sweated, too. 'A was a dawdler, I knows it; but 'a never gave me words. Come fair, come foul, 'twas all one to him, and I must be turnin' every stitch and seam back to the Company, even his neckbands; I've gone and lost two, or like enough 'a sold them, poor lad, to buy 'im a nip of brandy, 'a had no other vice. No man more, no man more, O Heaven, Heaven help me! No man! 'A said little, but 'twas a comfort-like to have 'im about. 'A was ever sayin', 'Mind my words, wife, them asthmas is mean, they'll play me false yet.' . . . Well, they played 'im false, they did, they did. . . . If 'a were no better than another, ye might say, better luck next time. . . . But 'a never broke me but one mirror in all these twenty years, and that came o' crossin' 'im, and me, I'd be calling 'im Big Coward. Big Coistrel,

and 'im, 'a'd not answer more'n that andiron. O, that ever I said it! O God! O God! No man more, no man! I'll never find the like o' 'im; and that ain't the half of it, 'a'll have one of us off yet, 'a will, one of the family, for 'a went into his box with one leg longer than t'other, and that's a sign, that is! I never knowed it to fail yet. . . ."

It is from this rabble, however, from these shameful and blighted creatures, that the enchanters of their day, the queens of beauty and of gallantry, emerged; a Laguerre, daughter of a wafer-vendor; a Quoniam, daughter of a pastry-cook; a d'Hervieux, daughter of a laundress; a Constat, daughter of a fishwife. Sophie Arnould is almost alone in that she escaped from a more or less *bourgeois* family; all the others have only the Fishmarket for cradle and the gutter for origin.

From childhood on, these daughters of the people mature for seduction, amid cynicism, ignoble sentiments, blunt, coarse speech, and besetting examples. Nothing defends them, nothing protects them; nothing instills or preserves a sense of honor in them. Their modesty is violated before it is really formed. Of religion, they retain but a few superstitious practices, for example the custom of having a mass said to the Virgin every Saturday, a custom they were secretly to observe at the height of the most abandoned libertinage. They acquire their idea of duty and their idea of virtue in woman only from the censures of their neighbors, from mockeries, from jokes, from signs of the horns made in the street at young girls who behave badly, at those who are, as the people says, "under the sign of the widow: we know you." The very picture of marriage looms up before them only under its repugnant form, a household noisy with insults and blows.

In addition to the temptations assailing this young girl, unrestrained, unsupported, without strength and without moral conscience, there are the license of life among the people, the liberty of pleasures to which parents accustom and in which they encourage their children. What an ele-

ment of danger was the *quinquette* (public-house) where the common people spent Sundays from morning till night in those *salons* of Rompommeau where, on the walls as on ail lips, Drunkenness played with Obscenity! What schools, all those small gardens, where little girls tried their luck at dancing *la Fricassée* on prime little feet. Woman awakened there in the child; her senses, her coquetries and her ambitions came to birth there, as it were, in an atmosphere warm and corrupt, charged with the odor of new wine and the fumes of racketing. Here it was that a lass learned to frolic; here it was she would come and soon parade:

Avec le bonnet à picot
 Monté tout frais en *misticot*,

her gorget ruff of lawn or of mignonette-lace:

La *coiffe* faisant le licou,
 Par derrière nouée en chou.

and her long cloth bodice on which a narrow kerchief

Beckons to the lover:
 Come, and look us over.

with a trinket at her ear, a muslin apron, the thimble-chain of her belt at her little pocket, a bouquet at her bib, a short brown or red petticoat, mittens of fine knit, a crucifix of gold on a chain, stockings with clocks, and shoes with a *Tombacle* buckle.

If the girl were at all shapely, if she had a taste for dancing, she soon became one of the celebrities of the place. She took the tone, the manner of that great personage of popular pleasure whom Rétif de la Bretonne has painted for us, the *danseuse de quinquette*, whose cry he has preserved: "Waiter, a *canard* and a good one or I'll knock you one!" In the *salon* of the Grand Vainqueur, she became the life and soul of the *vigorous dances*, one who, by virtue of the trade she attracted, was entitled to come

with whomever she wished, to be served at cost price and to enjoy a good supper for two for eighteen *sous*.

The author of the *Contemporaines* shows us these pretty venders, pretty criers of the street, pretty fishmongers, going to sup at the *Maison Blanche* or at the *Glacière*, eager but to *guzzle* and twirl in a cotillon. There we see them in linen *déshabillés* with red squares, a great apron of black taffeta, pockets six fingers longer than their short skirts, and white woollen stockings with red clocks; and some we see in a white *casquin* over a skirt of crimson taffeta, or in a kirtle with short flounces, made of calico with red spots, and an apron of green *burat*. We hear them singing at the *Pavillon Chinois*, their favorite tavern:

Je suis une fille d'honneur.
Ainsi, comme l'était ma mère;
J'ai pris naissance d'un malheur
Qui fait que j'ignore mon père.
.

or:

En revenant de *Saint-Denis*
Où l'on boit à grande mesure,
J'allais pour regagner Paris
Un peu *poussée* de nourriture.
.

or else:

Il m'a démis la lulette.
Ah! Ah! qui me la remettra?
.

And these frequenters of guinguettes are to be found again dancing, singing and drinking at the *p'tit trou*, at the *Pont au Bled*, at the *Petit Gentilly*, and at the *Grand Vainqueur* out by the Gate of the Gobelins.

Such a life inevitably entailed a liaison with some handsome gadabout, a lackey or sergeant in the Guards, some one of those recruiters, true roués of the rabble, horrible corrupters of all that youth of market and ball. From those liaisons, from that libertinage, many girls sank into vice, into some hovel of the Rue Maubée or of the Rue

Pierre-au-lard. Soon they would flute a furtive *Chit! Chit!* from the window of some obscure street, or become, at night-fall, what that century called "*des ambulantes.*" The most fortunate, the least shameful, obtained from some student of surgery or from a procurer unfaithful to his wife the meager furniture and the little hangings of Siamese calico or Bergamo tapestry which were the ambition and envy of the girls of the populace. Others rose as high as a *demi-lune* of the Pont Neuf, for which a lover paid the rent. Still others, retiring from infamy, were put into a convent by an old man, using, said the age, the method of gardeners who steam celery; the convent cured them of their former habits, scoured their dirt, washed away what was most gross in their past, and trained them to the conduct of a *fille du monde*.

Few girls, it is fair to acknowledge, fell into the ultimate disgrace of vice of their own accord. Often poverty pushed them downward by degrees or plunged them in at one fell stroke; in all this corruption, there is to be found a prime toxic, as it were, of despair. Ten or twelve *sous* were then the wage of a woman's work and what she must live on. Rétif de la Bretonne tells us that the mistress-seamstresses gave their workwomen only from ten to twelve *sous* a day, when it was established that their food, their lodging and their upkeep amounted to twenty *sous*. A pea-sheller, for instance, earned only eight *sous* per day.

Moreover this wage was precarious; it was threatened and curtailed at the end of the century by an almost general mode: the entrance of man into work and into trades more particularly proper to the hands of women; a vast influx of bootmakers for women, of tailors for women, of hair-dressers for women. And what breadwinning remained for woman, when Linguet denounced the competition put up against so essentially feminine a work as embroidery by lackeys who embroidered in ante-chambers, by grenadiers doing gold and silver braiding in the barracks-room and wearying the inhabitants of their garrisons by

offers of ruffles and cuffs with which the pockets of the uniforms were crammed? ¹

Over the heads of all these loose women,² escaping from misery, emerging from the people, rising to a beginning of fortune, taking on, little by little, from one adventure to the next, a sort of rank in vice, a kind of position in society, there loomed ever the hand and menace of the police, the capricious and arbitrary exercise of its severities and brutalities. On the horizon of her life, at the end of her thoughts, the *fille* always saw the Salpêtrière, whose doors opened so easily, for a carousal of which she was innocent, for taking the son of a family of quality as lover, for a trifle, often for a mere suspicion. Through her own experience or the tales of her companions, she knew that terrible Hospital; knew the expeditious sentences of the Court, and how, as the Clerk read: "Such and such a woman accused of such and such a thing, arrested!" a single word: *To the Hospital!* fell from the lips of a judge deaf to the moans, tears, and sobs, which straightway succeeded the insolences of the *fille* of the Régence.³ The Hospital meant the rigors of a by-gone day, an almost barbarous discipline; she was shaven, and, in case of relapse, submitted to corporal punishment.

¹ *Causes of the Public Disorder by a True Citizen*, Avignon. 1784.

The same complaint is to be found in the *Mariage de Figaro*.

MARCELINE . . . "Is there a single calling left for those unfortunate girls? They had a natural right to all trades dealing with the adornment of women; we allow a thousand workers of the other sex to practise them."

FIGARO . . . "They make even soldiers embroider!"

² *Les Etreennes morales utiles aux jeunes gens* quotes the number of *filles* within Paris as high as 40,000; another book carries the number to 60,000 adding ten thousand privileged *filles*, and speaks of 22,000 contracts deposited with notaries in 1760, giving them an annual revenue of ten millions.

³ Two caricatural engravings of the eighteenth century show us this punishment so cruel to woman. In one of them on the step of a door leading out on a court, an inflexible commissaire is implored by a kneeling woman, while a prentice barber, armed with a razor, is making her great curls fall to the ground. A wheel-barrow is already laden with cut hair. On the wall one reads notices saying: *Police Ordinances concerning debauched women. New and very elegant bonnets for shaved heads. Sale of hair.* The other, which bears the title of *The Desolation of the filles de joie* represents their appearance before the Police Commissioner whose

Nor did the indulgence of manners fully correct the letter of the law; however reassured she might be by the usual tolerance of the power upon which she depended, by its accommodations and its facilities, the *fille* did not forget that a severity allowed to slumber, might, of a sudden, awaken. Some fine morning the police might be forced to make a show of zeal by a book aimed against the government, by the cry of a "friend of morality," laying at its door responsibility for the disorders which the *filles* brought into the family, by an archbishop's charge, by almost anything! Such provocation sufficed for the police to lay hands on all the *filles*, without motive or cause, and to arrest them *en masse*, at their houses, at the end of the play, at the fair—with the sole exception of those who kept a carriage by the month.

But, in contradiction to the police laws, there were other laws far more effective, based far more surely on public assent, which protected the kept woman from these accidental severities, from these raids which peopled the Salpêtrière, Saint-Martin and Sainte-Pélagie. Until November 1774, it was enough for a woman to be listed, to be on the rolls of the Opera or of the Comédie Française; she was no longer submitted to the mere pleasure of the Police, she enjoyed common inviolability, and entered, so to speak, into an absolute possession of her person. The least of the girls of the chorus, of the song or dance ensemble, the last of the supernumeraries, was by right emancipated; a father or mother, indignant at her conduct, could no longer exercise parental control over her; and if she were married, she was allowed to defy her husband.¹

How keenly, then, all these women, *demi-castors*, *filles* secretary, seated at a small table, writes on a paper: *Julie, Barbe, Louison*. French guards are dragging supplicating women with high headdresses in front of the tribunal. In the rear, a cart filled with women with shaven heads is moving towards an old building, its roof covered with owls, bearing the legend: *Maison de Santé*.

¹ Petition to M. le lieutenant-général de police of Paris on the courtesans of fashion and the ladies of good quality at Paris. From the press of a company of people ruined by women, 1762.

of moribund virtue aspired to the boards which gave freedom, which delivered them from the power of their families, which saved them from the reports of Inspector Quidor! To rise to tread these boards was the effort and the ambition of each of them. They put every form of influence they could possibly engineer into play in order to reach a Thuret or a de Vismes, in order to cross the threshold of that famous and fearful study, the office of the director. Under pilasters with acanthus leaves, under naked nymphs slumbering in great frames, in the majestic boudoir, the all-powerful master thrones it in a dressing-gown, beside a desk laden with the *fascii* of the lictors, with plumed helmets, with brocades, with open scores of *Castor and Pollux*. (Was not this the setting that Baudouin, the painter and historian of semi-virtue chose for the *Road to Fortune*?) The director is generally human: given youth, a pretty smile, a show of leg, a little charm and much readiness on her part, he consents to receive a woman and accept her application. Once the master is won, the woman is put on the rolls; and however slight her talent, Maltaire *the Devil* or some other skilful artist can put her, at the end of three months, in the way of holding her own in a ballet. It is then she appears in the "wings" clad in sky-blue and water-green silk, dressed as a brook, disguised as a flower, as a sunbeam, enveloped in gauze, crowned with garlands, half-naked, her body visible through the shortened cloud, through a skirt of ribbons, through the scant clothing of a goddess that the roguish pencil of Boquet excels in drawing. Nor will adventures lag. But even better than at the performances, the little dancer captures hearts during rehearsal, during the long winter rehearsals. On a chair conquered not without difficulty, at the very edge of the orchestra, her legs nonchalantly crossed at the knee, wrapped in ermine or in sable, her feet on a foot-warmer of crimson velvet, tying knots with a distraught air with a golden shuttle, opening her tobacco-boxes, inhaling salts from flasks of rock crystal, darting a thousand stealthy glances towards the

wings full of men, she will soon carry off her prize. High finance or rich foreigners are not slow to appreciate her. And after one of these rehearsals, fortune comes to the *fille d'Opéra* in the form of a farmer of the revenue.

That was the capital step, the flight of the *fille galante* toward the great world, toward the high sphere of the *demoiselles de bon ton*, a world which lacked nothing since it possessed its poets, its artists, its physicians, its *salon*, its director of conscience and even a church!—and lackeys whose height caused astonishment in the street, loges of state at first nights, seats at the sessions of the Academy where it triumphed amid the sparkle of diamonds. The *salon* of painting was filled with pictures of that world; Art sought its models there; sculpture fashioned it a light immortality in talc, the only immortality it could bear. Vauxhalls and Coliseums rose for it alone; architects dreamed of Parthenons in its honor. Its luxury passed down the public promenades in triumph; its carriages of porcelain, with marcassite reins, caused the wonder of Longchamps. Everything around it was opulence; everything was magnificence beneath its hand; so much so, that, at public auctions, the most betitled and affluent ladies disputed its leavings, anything marked with its sign. By the splendor and brilliance it shed, by the prodigious spectacle it offered, by its myriad resplendence, its echo, its movement, the unexpected rises to power in its midst and its unforeseen changes of fortune, this world resembled a fairy spectacle. It rose to power through all it touched, approached and captivated. It occupied and distracted the Royal Coucher; the King found amusement in its anecdotes and, smiling, turned the pages of the unfettered novel of its days and nights. It interested the Court; it empassioned Versailles, where the exile of a Razetti caused a rebellion. It was almost a power, a power with its minions and victims, a power which pushed Rochon de Chabannes into diplomacy, a power which obtained a letter of Privy Seal against Champcenets.

Strangely enough, all the women of this world kept abreast with their adventures. Rising from prostitution, they evolve the great gallantry of the eighteenth century. They bring an elegance to debauchery, they adorn vice with a sort of grandeur, and, in scandal, they find a sort of glory and grace like that of the ancient courtesan. Bred in the streets, appearing suddenly radiant and adored, they seem to crown the libertinage and immorality of the age. At the summit of the century, they represent the Prosperity of Pleasure. They possess the fascination of every gift, of every prodigality, of every folly. None of them but bears in her all the appetites of the age and all its tastes. The spirit of the eighteenth century displays in them its supreme seduction, the fine flower of its cynicism. They radiate wit, they welcome it to their breast, they caress and intoxicate it. In the manner of Sophie Arnould, they utter opinions on men and on things, maxims such as Chamfort might have cast in the mould of a play upon words; they write those artless letters which rise in one instance to the gross tone of Rabelais, in another to the gayety of La Fontaine. In their own theatres they indulge themselves with the amusements of unpublished comedy, that feast of reason furnished by the supreme debauchery of the French spirit. They live in the atmosphere of the opera of the day, of the new play, of the book of the week. They reach out to the world of letters, they surround themselves with *littérateurs*. To them writers owe the quickening of their first love; poets breathe their earliest sighs at their feet. Philosophers swarm to their suppers, to the suppers of a Dervieux, of la Duthé, of Julie Talma, of la Guimard, bringing the dreams of their ideas, toasting the future in the lap of Pleasure. The greatest names of France surge to their side and move about them, her greatest passions, her princes, her ideas, her hearts and her intelligences. Undisputed favorites of public opinion, they grow daily by virtue of their lovers, of their popularity, of the renown of their Atticism, throughout all Europe; and the curiosity,

the attention, the genius itself of the eighteenth century turns for a moment about these celebrated *filles*, as though about its muses and its tutelary saints.

Through its singers, its dancers, its actresses, through all the women of the theatre whose talents and glory shed such great lustre upon it, this world of famous *impures* entered, from the very beginning of the century, into society itself and into the very highest places of the noblest company. The eighteenth century, which refuses actresses its nuptial blessing¹ and throws out the corpse of the most illustrious of them onto the banks of the Seine, does not visit the contempt and, if one may say so, the disgust of its laws upon the women of the theatre. The actress is not surrounded by the repugnance of *bourgeois* prejudices. Society, far from closing its ranks to her, rather seeks her out, flatters her, adulates her, welcomes her intelligence, her gaiety, her wit. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, in a letter of charming naïveté tells the great and continual effort she is obliged to make in order to escape the invitations of great ladies, jealous of possessing her, disputing her, fighting for her person, taking her away from that life of intimacy and good friendship so dear to her heart. It is at the Hôtel Bouillon that la Pelissier gives vent to her finest and her greatest stupidities. The very highest company goes to a country ball given by Mademoiselle Antier for the convalescence of the King, in the meadow of Auteuil, where

¹An actor or actress wishing to marry was obliged to abandon the theater. But it happened that, once the act of abandonment had been made, the First Gentleman of the Chamber sent to the newly blessed a Royal Order to return to the stage and the actress obeyed the King's order. The Archbishop of Paris then declared that he would grant no actor or actress permission to marry unless he were given a declaration signed by the Four First Gentlemen of the Chamber to the effect that they would not thereafter institute a Royal Order of return to the stage. Permission was thus refused to Molé and Mademoiselle d'Epinay, who did not bring the Archbishop this declaration signed by the Four Gentlemen. It is true that, through the connivance of friends, that permission, slipped in among others, was signed unwittingly by the Archbishop; but, having been informed of the deception, unable to take back the sacrament, he placed the priest who had given the nuptial benediction under an interdict, so that in future his clergy, in cases of such importance, should not act upon a signed permission. (Correspondence of Grimm, Vol. VI.)

ladies of the noblest name dance until morning under the illumined willows.

During one part of the century, the women of highest birth are to be found sitting at Mademoiselle Quinault's table, where they will hear the talk and laughter of all the intellect and wit of the period. This rapprochement is continuous, daily; nor is there virtually any difference between the Présidente Portail and Sophie Arnould, when they exchange that conversation which all Paris repeats and from which the actress emerges with the finer rôle, to the joy of Diderot. Marriage, moreover, opens the door of society to these women, it establishes them at the very court itself; a man madly infatuated, or one ruined, with no honor left to lose, and nothing but his name to sell, would raise them out of their pasts, elevate them to honors, to the privileges of the lady of title, even to the rights of the marquise, the right to a livery, to a train-bearer, to a sack, to a hassock at church.

Besides this triumphant and dazzling gallantry with all its echoes and brilliance; beside these women of pleasure, parading every debauch of grace, wit and of taste, crowned with shamelessness and folly, cynical and superb, there existed another gallantry. Other gallant women, less in the public eye, appear in half-tone amid a light without brilliance, which lends them a gentleness and seems to leave them with a sense of modesty. The venal love they represent borrows an indefinable light innocence from the freshness of their taste, from the air they breathe and the country they inhabit; a vague perfume of idyll mingles with it and hovers about them. Here and there, in their existence, a corner of pastoral life appears, recalling a Boucher landscape crossed by a beribboned shepherdess or rather evoking the memory of one of those airy sketches, in which Fragonard, parting the branches of a tree, paints Pleasure running across the grass in the dress of a villager.

The type of these women must be sought in that charming lady, so slight of waist, so small of hand, so vivid and so expressive of eye, with her faintly *retroussé* nose, with a chin scored by a dimple; its essence must be sought in the light grace and the lively delicacy of the courtesan Mazerelli, always to be seen in the shadow of great trees on the meadows, in the evening, seated on a hay-rick, watching nightfall, or walking on the edge of the water, disappearing amid the reeds of the islands of the Seine near Charenton, then reappearing in that pretty boat whose oars her hands alight on as if in play. Always she appears strolling, in *fêtes* on the green or *fêtes* on the stream, where, against a background of Summer or Spring, heading the gayety and coquetries of one of those rustic ballets of the Italian Opera which she has just left, she is accompanied by young girls on either bank, dressed, like herself, as peasants, but peasants rustically prettified by a theatrical designer of the *Menus Plaisirs*. At one time her house is at Noisy-le-Sec, at another in the village of Carrières, where she keeps her small chaise, her two horses and her three domestics, whither she summons to her garden which is open at all hours, dance and violins, the village and all its lovers. She presides over the rejoicings of the countryside, she furnishes it with its joys, its amusements, its innocent sport. Indeed, on the Day of Sainte-Claire, her house is filled with dainties and flowers, with presents brought by the countryfolk, whilst the river resounds with the reports of mortars, of fireworks sent up in her honor by the region. Is she not the patron of the place? Does she not hold its lordship in very deed? At the Fête de Carrières, she is solicited to give the holy bread, and the churchwardens send her the keys of the church.¹ Behind this figure of the *femme entretenue*, gay, youthful, fresh, under her *rouge*, as a joy of nature and happy in the pleas-

¹Deposition for Mademoiselle Claire Mazerelli, a minor, against L'Homme, a knight, former Alderman of the city of Paris and his sons and the accused accessories.

ure she creates about her, lurks a faint wistfulness, a touch of musing coquetry, a reverie mingled with a vague repining that seems to call for distractions. This quality especially accounts for her allurements; it possesses a character of melancholy tenderness, perhaps originally drawn from a novel and now become in her a natural action, a habit of tone, of mind and of soul; it is a comedy of good faith, which forms her chief fascination and which inspires in the Marquis de Beauvau so prodigious a love that he implores la Mazarelli to accept the name of Beauvau! And what letters, humiliated in passion, prostrate in prayer, arrive from every camp in Flanders to that woman whom the Marquis, at the wars, calls "his God, his universe, his *petite femme!*" What tears during seven years, when he believes her vexed at him! What sleepless nights when he awaits her answer! What threats to bury himself in a convent, to hide himself from the eyes of the world, if she refuses to marry him! And the Marquis de Beauvau dead, this woman retains such a captivation that after the most resounding lawsuits, after a public liaison with Moncrif, she becomes the Baronne de Saint-Chamond.

The eighteenth century conceals among its courtesans a whole little family of similar women, who save all the appearances a woman may save when engaged in an amiable vice, all the decency she can retain in the commerce of gallantry, all the constancy in a love that surrenders and devotes itself. To their intellectual charms, to their native indulgence, to their expansive kindness, to their dreamy attitude, to their airs and to a certain taste in sentiment, they join a certain respect for the world, which gives them a sort of respect of themselves. Suffering, as one of them has said, from the injustice of a public "which, judging some by the infamous conduct of others, places them on a level with despicable objects," they retain a modesty in the face of public opinion. And the corruption of the age almost instills a little of the honor of love and some of its virtues in these women surrounded by the most ardent, the most deli-

cate, and the most flattering adoration. Is it not one of them, that other shepherdess who inspired Marmontel's *Shepherdess of the Alps*, who in her turn married and became the Comtesse d'Herouville, is it not Lolotte who hears fall from the lips of a mighty lord the most gallant tribute of love uttered in the eighteenth century? "Do not gaze at it so long, I cannot give it to you," said Lord Albermarle to her one evening in the country, as she stared at a star.

One figure veils, effaces and poetizes all these figures of courtesans, radiant or modest, tender or cynical. Their shadows, flitting before our eyes, evoke in our memory one name that banishes their names. So soon as we stir up the history of the *filles* of the past, those ashes of vice, that dust of scandal, there rises softly, as a fragrance might arise from amid corruption, that immortal heroine of fiction: Manon Lescaut. Let us untangle the truth and observation from creation and the invention of the writer. Manon Lescaut is a romantic type before being a historical type; and we must not see in her a complete representation of the amorous prostitution of the eighteenth century or a faithful picture of the moral character of the courtesan of the day. Doubtless there is a whole part of its complexion, a whole half of its life, illumined by the candles of dens and the torches of suppers of which Prévost has given a vivid, life-like reproduction. As we follow her, from the inn-yard of the Arras-Amiens coach down to the road she treads to exile, her actions, her speech and her allure is that of the *fille* of the age; she possesses the winsome aspects of her freshness, the first touches of the *grisette*, then her yielding, her naïve shamelessness, her weaknesses before money, her natural and as though ingenuous perfidies. She sinks little by little; she plunges into vice naturally and without remorse; she gives way without instinctive revolt and without repugnance of soul before the necessities of life, the lessons of her brother, and the offers of M.G.M. She moves from laughter to tears, from delicacy to infamy, retaining

for the man she drags downward a foundation of sincere but sensual attachment, which fails to raise her to the level of remorse. Prévost has painted that Manon, the Manon who only asks for "pleasure and pastime," according to nature, and in her we recapture the soul of the *fille*. But we must stop short this side of her transfiguration, of her expiation through unhappiness, of her torture, of her humility, of her shame and of her agony. The Magdalen Des Grieux follows on the road to America, the woman whose grave he digs with his sword—the only attribute of the gentleman his love has left him,—that courtesan who expires confessing herself to love in a last whisper of passion, that repentant martyr-like Manon Prévost drew out of his heart and his genius. The eighteenth century knew her not.

We will find a portrait where the true physiognomy of the *fille du monde* lives again in a little book, a vivid mordant little story, touched subtly and freely in sharp, witty strokes, in the manner of a water body color. *Thémidore*, which might be called the truth about Manon Lescaut, reveals us those women, possessing the graces of a *bonne fille*, heightened by charm and sentiment and by only the whims of passion, the Argentines, the Rozettes, "adorable girls who, short of libertinage, have the best inclinations in the world." We see them, in their untucked dresses of yellow *moire*, with a coiffure made to be ruffled; they spend their time gayly and carelessly in a light atmosphere of facile pleasures, amid the turbulence and dissipation of small houses, in a sort of delicate orgy, elegant and delightful. Charming play, talk scarcely proper, a wit frisking around in a light vulgarity, badinage, song, exquisite and irritating fare, the pop of corks, glasses and broken porcelain are the noise and the amusement that fill their days and their nights, their minds, even their hearts. They are occupied merely in skimming a novel, in chatting about laces and clothes; or else they cheat at *Mediator*. They come and go, they pass by, smiling; they dart a glance or a kiss; they

offer their cheeks; and if the men who love them, wish to forget them and replace them, they send for a folio of broad and humorous engravings to be placed by their beds in the morning.

With the exception of a few conversions, (that of Mademoiselle Gauthier, told by Laclos; that of Mademoiselle Luzi; that of Mademoiselle Basse who becomes a Carmelite nun), with the further exception of a few rare waves of tenderness, a trace of passion shown at great intervals, the heart-rending episode of the death of Zéphyre wishing to die on the heart of her lover¹—no gloom, almost no tears are to be encountered in the history of these women whom life treats like spoiled children; no self-sacrifice, no instance of unselfishness, no catastrophes but only petty misfortunes, a letter of Privy Seal which locks them up in the convent where they chatter more or less like Vervet, and from which they emerge embracing the sisters. The very evening of their departure, they re-arise in the world, at a gay supper, a glass of Champagne in their hands; they begin to weep again when a lover abandons them, and to be consoled when he fails to return. But do they earn a few thousand pounds? They marry some merchant: they attach themselves to his trade, to their husband even. Between their end and that of Manon, lies

¹ Here is the narrative of Rétif in *Monsieur Nicolas or the Human Heart Unveiled*. I found my poor friend in profound dejection. She was suffocating. However, she smiled as she saw me: she took my hand and said to me: "It is nothing!" I believed her . . . I embraced her. She smiled once more on me. They brought me what she must take. She received it from my hand and received it with a sort of avidity. I told her I would not leave her . . . Zoé remained alone with me. . . . As soon as there were but we three left, my mistress wished to have her head on my heart, and she said she was breathing better. I uncovered my breast and placed her head there! . . . She appeared to fall asleep. Perhaps she grew calm. She loved me so tenderly that her soul, being thus fulfilled, no longer felt suffering. I remained thus; I was motionless fearing to make the slightest movement. Towards three o'clock in the morning, we wished to make her take something. She could not swallow. Then Zoé, who knew the symptoms of the death agony, embraced me quickly and wished to oblige me to put my mistress's head on the pillow. "No, no!" I answered quickly. The patient looked at me. It was her last glance. She kissed my hand. I glued my mouth to her discolored lips. She uttered a deep sigh . . . which I received. . . . It was her soul. . . . She gave it to me whole!"

the distance between the sands of New Orleans and the gutter of the Rue Saint-Honoré.

It is only in novels that we find a great misfortune or a lofty sentiment regenerating these women. Loving through pleasure, they seem created solely for its sake, animated by it alone. Their soul does not seem capable of feeling the miseries of their bodies or the pollution of their whole being. The infamy of their amours envelops them without touching them. They seem sensitive to nothing save what affects them in all their senses, to brutalities at the hands of man, to the rigors of prison, to the material severities which reach them. Insensibility takes the place of conscience in them, and inclines them without discernment, disgust or revolt, to the fatality of their acts and their fortune. When led to the Salpêtrière, no shame burns their cheek at the curses and derisive gestures the fishwives of the Market cast upon them: they retain, throughout their whole lives and on all occasions, the unreflecting, almost animal, passivity of creatures without personality, possessed by instincts. They might be said to know themselves placed in the world like the flower, merely to smile, to be fragrant and to rot.

Did not the century itself encourage the debauchery of woman in this carelessness of immorality, in this serene unconsciousness? Did not indulgence lie everywhere about the *filles* like a complicity? And did not the ideas of the age entertain towards her virtually a feeling of tolerant gentleness, almost a social sympathy? It seemed as though the eighteenth century still respected the sex of woman in those dishonoring it and love in those who sold it. Here we touch ideas which exist no longer; it is extremely difficult to recapture their accent and their compass. The historian progresses with ease from one fact to another on the ground of documents: like the civil life of the individual, the actions of humanity leave positive and material testimony. But should the historian wish to pierce to the very character of a century; should he attempt to challenge

the opinions of an age upon its circumstances; should he attempt to recover the intimate conscience of a society no longer extant upon a point, upon a general disposition of minds, upon what becomes a prejudice after having been an opinion, upon a tendency, upon an idea, he can seize but a vestige of it in history, an effaced memory, a little less than what custom keeps of a tradition;—an enormous lacuna, and one we feel at each step into that bygone society when, as has been so aptly said, manners replaced laws.

To recover the code of the eighteenth century, we must rid ourselves of modern morality, we must lay aside everything the nineteenth century has added to general manners in the way of at least apparent modesty, and we must place ourselves in the milieu, we must adopt the point of view of a gallant society. The public conscience of that age assuredly put the *fille* without the law; but it did not place her without humanity, it barely placed her without society. Moreover the severity of the police grew daily milder throughout the century,¹ and the curse of the public ward was the only blight to which the *fille* was exposed; the world added neither insult nor shame to it. It took no part in the repression of prostitution, which it tolerated without provoking. Anger or a curse or an insult against the wanton is extremely rare; almost always she is called, by courtesy, the *fille du monde*. Witness the Maréchal de Richelieu appealing to French gallantry in her behalf by calling her "more of a woman than her sister." Her profession stamped her with no original sin; contact with impurity bore no pollution; the name of the most wretched of mistresses, often gathered from the mud of Paris, did not befoul the great name of the prince of the blood or the hero who raised it to his own level. The

¹There are some very sharp complaints at this period because no sting remained in punishment and because the police seemed itself to be cooperating in robbing penalty of its shame. People waxed indignant because women formerly condemned to tonsure, to an uniform of serge, to lodgings in a common room, almost to bread and water, finally to manual labor, now found, for the most part, a means of exemption from tonsure and of escape from hard labor.

woman who embodied pleasure in the eyes of her age met with almost a caressing pity, throughout her life, on every side. Nor was society alone kindly to her; even religion stood without defence against her; a fund of pity for the Magdalens welled up in the Catholic heart of that age which a rigor, less Catholic than Protestant, less French than Genevan, had not yet hardened against the woman who erred. The most sternly virtuous of women commiserated with them, charitably and tenderly. To them, a Manon was still a woman: they lavished interest and tears on the romance of her life as they would on the woes of their sex. What wonder that the *fille* finds pardon everywhere in an age when scandal carries her in triumph to the very throne of a King's mistress? With corruption flourishing so royally and creating such confusion by its prestige, that one of the rarest women of the age, Madame de Choiseul, boasts that she "entertains an esteem for Madame de Pompadour," what principles could be invoked, amid the debauchery of Versailles, to condemn the debauchery of the street?

But, better than deductions and words, a certain picture illustrates the ideas and opinions of the time on the *fille* and, indeed, the *fille* herself. Observe those hundreds of couples descending from the Church of the Priory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs; that file of carts teeming with a coarse gayety; that flock of *filles*; all those laughing heads, under their waving topknots, amid a myriad ribbons and jonquil favors. What noise! what sallies! A man goes by. Voices from the carts call him by name. A little priest passes; a thousand jests greet his passage. There is neither remorse nor care in all these creatures. How far they are from the attitude of reverie and melancholy with which the imagination of the Abbé Prévost endows the defeated and desperate body of his heroine, as she lies on the straw of the cart bound for Le Havre. So they file by, preceded by their men, wearing their colors, with a jonquil cockade in their hats; or else, bound to the man they have chosen for husband, they pass, two by two, yoked

and coupled, light of foot, trying to dance, with jests that move the public and the soldiers detailed to guard them to laughter, indulging freely in that liberty granted to the condemned as their ultimate recreation. Such are the atmosphere and appearance of a police execution of the eighteenth century: such indeed is the departure for the Mississippi. The Police itself smiles while it punishes. A final pity is allowed to them in this carnival, in this masquerade of a wedding which amuses them as they go into exile. Tinsel keeps their chains out of sight, ribbons prevent the chafe of ropes. And no woman is alone! It is the departure of la Salpêtrière for Cythera, the parody of a *fête galante* by Watteau. Watteau perpetuated its memory in his work; for did he not draw the "Embarkation for the Islands" in this Century? ¹

¹ MS journal of the Régence. Bibliothèque Impériale. S. F. 1886.

The MS says that on a single occasion, one hundred and eighty *filles* were married in the Church of the Priory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs to as many thieves taken from the prisons.

CHAPTER VIII

BEAUTY AND THE MODE

BEAUTY, THE BEAUTY of women, her perishable and charming material form, seems to follow human fashions and to be remoulded by every society in the Creator's hands to conform to the ideal of the day. In the eighteenth century what was that ideal? Question art, that magic mirror where the Coquetry of the past still smiles; visit museums, studies, collections; stroll through galleries, where a *salon* of another day, ranged along the walls, motionless, mute, seems to watch the present pass by; study prints, go through engravings where, in the gust of the paper, passes the shadow of women who are no more; go from Nattier to Drouais, from Latour to Roslin, consult the thousand and one portraits which give a body to history and a physical personality to so many personages who have disappeared; summon the woman of the eighteenth century, resuscitate her, weigh her with your eyes, feel her a presence at your side, and you will find three types expressing and resuming the three general characteristics of the beauty of the eighteenth century and its three moral expressions.

The first of these types is the woman emerging from the century of Louis XIV. Choose a beauty from that *Olympe* of princesses, the brazen vanguard of the century of Louis XV, advancing on the clouds of a mythological triumph, the paw of the lion of Nemeus on her throat or the ewer of Hebe in her hand. The brow is small, narrow and low, a proud and short brow. The hardness of the thick and wide eyebrows heightens the hardness of the round eye, large, open, almost fixed. The glance, unsoftened by the lashes, mingles an imperious effrontery with the

secret ardors of headstrong desire. The nose is leonine, the mouth heavy and fleshy; and the chin fails to lengthen the broad oval which widens at the cheek-bones. Such are the beautiful *inhumaines* of the golden age, well-nourished beauties, whose health warms their cheeks under great badges of brilliant red. They do not attract; they fascinate by a certain majestic immodesty, by the appeal of force, will-power and boldness. A pagan serenity gives them a superb repose; glutted with love, they digest and breed it. Their bovine air makes one think of Juno and of Pasiphaë; and in these bastards of Fable and of the Régence an indefinable over-fulsome classical grace constantly suggests comparisons with Homer and Virgil, comparisons so naturally made by the age that they lead President Hénault to name one the "Venus of the Æneid", another "Cleopatra bitten by the asp."

This type, effaced by Time and almost obsolete in the orgies of the Palais-Royal, reappears later in the century; but then it has lost its expression, hardness and grandeur; it has become doll-like, pretty and childish. The dream of the painter lends her a smile, and of her features Boucher makes the masque of his cherubs. At the end of the century, a sculptor again takes the face of the woman of the Régence; and, giving her youth, lightness and lasciviousness, respecting her lines, however, and leaving her a short forehead and eyes wide apart, Clodion makes of that head of a bacchante in repose the head of a nymph frolicsome and alive.

But already amid the deities of the Régence a more delicate and expressive type appears. We see the dawn of a beauty altogether different from the type of the Palais-Royal in that little woman whose bust, painted by la Rosalba, is in the Louvre. A lovely figure of subtlety, suppleness and gracility! Her delicate complexion suggests the whiteness of Dresden china, her black eyes light up her face; the nose is thin, the mouth small, the neck long and tapering. Nothing pompous, no operatic blazonry;

nothing but a bouquet at her waist, nothing but a crown of natural flowers whose leaves are the wanton curls of her hair. Here is a new grace; here, even to that little grimacing monkey held in her slender fingers, we foresee the disheveled charms and airs that the age will later idolize. Little by little, the beauty of woman becomes more animated and refined. It is no longer physical, material and brutal. It escapes from the finality of line; it breaks, so to speak, from the restricting feature; it is transformed into a luminous radiance. It acquires lightness, animation, and that spiritual life which thought or impressions lend to the expression of the face. It finds the soul and charm of modern beauty: *physiognomy*. Depth, reflection, a smile enter into her glance; her eye speaks. Irony tickles the corners of her mouth and glimmers, like a touch of light, on the half-open lip. Wit passes over her face, effaces and transfigures it; it palpitates, quivers, and throbs there; and, playing on all the invisible fibres which transform it by expression, refining and even mannerizing it, lending it a thousand shades of caprice, rehearsing it in the most subtle of modulations, exercising it in all manner of delicacies, the wit of the eighteenth century models the face of woman upon the mask of Marivaux's comedy, so mobile, diversified and delicate, so prettily enlivened by the coquetries of the heart, of grace and of taste.

Fashion models the countenance of woman; Nature herself seems to form it in the image of the time and its society. Pleasure plays in her features, the fever of a life of society shines in her glance. Her eyes become, according to the contemporary expression, "armed eyes", full of dash and fire; they take on what the language of the eighteenth century calls "*du vif, du sémillant, un lumineux particulier*," (vivacity, sparkle, a particular luminousness) a "poignance," says an English observer. It is a countenance constantly alive and illumined by those fugitive lights that make Madame de Rochefort's countenance to be likened to the awakening of morning. Vivacity, mobility and variety

of expression are everything in the charms of physiognomy so delicately described by Bachaumont in his portrait of his mother: “. . . Though my mother was not altogether a beauty, yet she fell little short, being so comely. Her complexion was a light brunette, bright and clear; her hair the most beautiful black; the bravest eyes in the world, which, moreover, were whatever she wished them to be, according to occasion. A nose, thin and noble, as pretty as pretty could be, wherein lurked an imperceptible quiver and play that enlivened her physiognomy and betrayed, so it seemed, the delicate impulses which moved within her, the while she spoke or listened. . . .” In this sketch, we have a perfect indication of the charm relished and pursued by the woman of the reign of Louis XV. Beauty was not her ambition, this latter-day lady, whose actions are all gesticulation, whose eyes are a lorgnon, whose walk is a flutter. She feared nothing so much as majesty. Thrills, surprises, the shifting impressions of which the Prince de Ligne speaks, “the hundred thousand things which happen in the upper portion of her face” must prevent her from being a beauty and must give her a face *above the beautiful*. Her face must at all times show sadness and joy, dejection and high spirits, every humor and thought, that flux and reflux of inconsistencies that won woman the name of a “woman of showers, who lightens, who thunders, who knows every weather.” The great victory was no longer to please or delight; above all, a woman’s face must *pique* by means of an irregular lightness of line, by freshness, gayety, fancy, by all that saves her from admiration and respect. Little eyes *à la chinoise*, a tilted nose resolutely trimmed “tit-bit-ward-ho!”, a knick-knack of a face, a ruffled air, even thinness, in a word, a “face in good taste”: such is the ruling type which spreads, over every visage, a certain playful and roguish unruliness, a brazen youth, a mischief like the cunning of a child; such is the grace that might have been penciled by Gravelot in the margin of the *Bijoux Indiscrets*.

To animate this face even more, and to give it a factitious life, there was rouge, the choice of which is so weighty a matter.¹ For it was not only a question of being painted; the great point was to have a rouge "which says something." More, the rouge must represent the person wearing it; the rouge of the lady of quality was not the rouge of the lady of the Court; the rouge of a bourgeoisie was neither the rouge of a lady of Court, nor the rouge of a lady of quality, nor the rouge of a courtesan; it was merely a soupçon of rouge, an imperceptible shade. At Versailles, on the contrary, the princesses wore it very bright and very high in color; they required that the rouge of women presented at Court be more accentuated than usual on the day of their presentation.² Nevertheless, the brilliant rouge of the Régence, which incarnadines the portraits of Nattier, (doubtless due to liquid Portugal rouge) declined under Louis XV, and was no longer to be seen save on the cheeks of actresses, where it formed that crude spot which Bocquet never forgot in his costume plates for the Opera. But its use was still widespread, the demand for it enormous. It was so widely consumed that in June 1780 a company offered five millions in cash to obtain the privilege of selling a rouge superior in quality to all kinds of rouges hitherto known. And, the following year, the Chevalier d'Elbée, who evaluated its annual sale at more than two million pots, asked that a tax of twenty-five *sols* be imposed upon each pot, to form pensions in favor of the wives and widows of impoverished officers.³ During the period, attempts were made to vary the staple rouge. Paris was agog for fully

¹The *Thousand and one Follies* tell us that women put on a half-rouge for the night.

²Unpublished Correspondence of Madame du Deffand. Michel Levy, 1850. Vol. I.—A letter of Voltaire's attests all the trouble that Maria Leczinska had on her arrival in France to become used to this coloring. A page of Bachaumont's tells what repugnance the use of the bright rouge of Versailles inspired in Madame de Provence. (*Mémoires of the Republic of Letters*, Vol. V.)

³In his brochure, the Chevalier d'Elbée said that a rouge-merchant of the Rue Saint-Honoré, named Montclar, had declared to him that he had furnished to the sieur Dugazon three dozen pots of rouge per year, six

a week over a lilac cosmetic which had made its appearance in the garden of the Palais-Royal. Then came a new rouge which lasted longer, which conquered the vogue and kept it: this was *serkis*, a rouge the color of the others but whose inventor claimed it was softened and rendered harmless by the introduction of that *serkis* of which the Khoran makes the food of the heavenly houris and which, in the seraglio, gives to the skin of the sultanas the velvet of youth. And *serkis* was succeeded by the famous rouge of Madame Martin. But once rouge was chosen, laid on and graduated, the toilette of the face was but half done; it now remained to give it wit, piquancy. A woman must dispose, arrange and sow, as though at hazard, with a provoking fantasy, those little pieces of gummed cloth called by poets "*mouches dans du lait*"—flies in milk—the *mouches* (patches). It was the last word in the toilette to seek and find the right place for these applicable beauty-spots, cut in the shapes of hearts, moons, comets, crescents, stars and shuttles. What attention a woman paid to adjust prettily these baits of love, the *badine* (playful) the *baiseuse* (kisser), and the *équivoque* (ambiguous), from the shop of the famous Dulac in the Rue Saint Honoré; to place, according to the rules, the *assassine* (murderess) at the corner of the eye, the *majestueuse* (queenly) on the forehead, the *enjouée* (sportive) in the fold made by laughter, the *galante* in the middle of the cheek, and the *coquette* called also *précieuse* and *fripette* (rogue) near the lips. The mode went further: for a moment, women wore on their right temple patches of velvet the size of a small plaster. And one day pretty Madame Cazes appeared with that singular *mouche*, surrounded with diamonds, on her temple.

Towards the end of the century, the mode changed completely. The charm of woman no longer lay in piquant graces, but in touching graces. Borne along by the great dozen to his wife, as many to Mademoiselle Bellioni, and as many again to Madame Trial. "Here among an actor and three actresses are no less than two-hundred and fifty-two pots of rouge each year; more, it costs six francs a pot."

return of the reign of Louis XVI towards sensibility, woman dreamed of a new ideal of beauty, whose features she composed according to books and pictures, according to the types of the painters and the heroines of the novelists. Upon her face, she sought to substitute the expression of her heart for the expression of her mind and the smile which comes from the soul for the smile which comes from the intellect. She aimed for ingenuity and candor, for an air of tenderness. She borrowed coquetries that she believed naïve from the young girl of the *Cruche Cassée*. She becalmed and sweetened her physiognomy; she made it tender and languishing; she wished it to be almost moribund and to recall the death-throes of Julie.

What she strove to give herself was the limpid look of the figures of Greuze, the "long and lingering" look that Mirabeau adored in his mistress. Her ambition was no longer to ravish but to produce an emotion; her coquetry was veiled with weakness and with a sort of faltering modesty that might be called the innocence of voluptuousness.

The brunette beauty, which had succeeded after many efforts in gaining recognition, then fell into an absolute discredit. Blue eyes and blond hair alone were pleasing; in that great wave of love for the blond, the mode went so far as to rehabilitate the red, a color which until then had *dishonored* France, and which had brought to the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI, so many pleasantries and witticisms from his sister Madame Adelaïde, about the Princesse de Saxe, his future wife.

Women with red hair even came to surpass blondes; and a powder, which gave a flamelike nuance to the hair, came into vogue.

It was an entire revolution of taste. There was no admiration or success any longer save for the style of beauty proscribed under Louis XIV, for the *figures à sentiment*. Women craved this beauty at any price. They had themselves bled like Madame d'Esparbès, in order to attain it

by pallor and languor. They sought it in those light coiffures, dressed far forward, surrounding the face with a half-shadow, edging the features with a wisp of cloud, giving the complexion the transparence of a reflection of light. Nor did woman cease to pursue it in the new fashion, a mode at once virginal and villager, which swathed all her person in lawns and gauzes, adorned her with simplicity and veiled her in whiteness.

The mode in this century more or less followed the transformations in the physiognomy of woman. It accompanied beauty, complied with its changes, accommodated itself to current taste. Fashion gave beauty the accomplishment of the things that framed it, of the materials that suited it, of arrangements, color and design, of all the inventions and appropriate coquetries which surround the type of woman with a sort of style in the character of her adornment and dress.

At the end of the reign of Louis XIV, women seemed to take their clothes and their veils, the pattern of their ballgowns and triumphs, from the swathings of the Immortals in Ovid's Olympus. Allegory held the scissors that cut her dresses. The colors women wore were the colors of an element: Water, Air, Earth and Fire, whichever she represented, designed her costume, undid her corsage, placed on her forehead the star of a diamond, knotted to her belt a crown of flowers, threw over her body the æry gown of Diana. These superb and celestial clothes gave women the appearance of flying deities, as though newly sprung from a cloud: their throats brazen and naked, their hands offering to the eagle of Jupiter a cup of mother-of-pearl and gold. Everything was gold, gauze and brocade; everything was silk modeled by the body alone, obeying the wind which wantoned amid its loose folds. Beauty floated in the light, shameless and splendid cloak of Fable. It smiled in the gowns of these nymphs, seated beside springs, whose white satin skirts, the color of water, imitated the meanderings of the wave. Mythological *négligés*, a pagan carnival

of the Régence dressing for ancient *fêtes*, for the Lupericalia given by Madame de Tencin to the Regent!

Descending from the cloud and from that fashion, women took the usual dress of the eighteenth century, that great dress inspired by the pictures of Watteau and reappearing in 1725 in the "Figures Françaises de Modes" designed by Octavien. Starting from the back, almost from the nape of the neck, where it bellied like an abbé's coat, it was free in its fullness, almost formless, floating like a wide dressing-gown¹ or like a stuffed domino which allowed her bare arms to escape from *engageantes* of lace. Here are the Irises and the Phyllises of the painter, de Troy. All were clad in that morning costume, garnished with button-holes of diamonds, as soon as the orders on jewelry of February 4 and July 4, 1720, were withdrawn. On her head, a woman wore only a little lace bonnet, with lappets drawn back at the lining, folded in triangles, advancing in a point over a low coiffure with little curled ringlets; or else she wore that hood which later became the *Thérèse*. On her neck, she had a cambric collar with great falling folds, or a *fichu*, worn loosely, or else a string of pearls. Then, from her throat to the tip of her flowered *mules* turning up at the toes and heelless, a great dress enveloped and concealed her entire body, in waves of material; save that, at the corsage, by half-opening the knots of her bodice-ribbons which were often laced ladder-like below the *parfait contentement*, she exposed herself. She seemed not to hold in this immense and flowing dress which, as it descended, swelled widely out about her at the hem. She had learned the secret of being veiled without being dressed in that slack costume, overflowing right and left, rolling over the

¹ At present convenience seems to be the only aim of the Parisienne when she dresses; on the public promenades it is rare to see a lady of any distinction save in corset and slippers. All of them, like Harlequins, wear an air of coming pleasures. . . . Contrary to its original nature, Paris has become rich in broad, massive waists and thick, hanging throats. There is nothing astonishing in this. The *deshabillé*, which is the usual dress of these ladies, gives their bodies such remarkable freedom to expand and thicken. La Bagatelle, July 11, 1718.

lines of her body as a wave, detached from its members yet following its movements more or less like the *mule* with which her foot toyed.

This toilette, with its incredible unfurling of skirt, represented the *panier* in the fullness, width and enormity of its development. The *panier* (which the princesses of the blood royal were soon to wear so full that they required a wide stool beside them) began on the model of the *paniers* of two English ladies who came to France in 1714; each year it became more popular, exaggerated and extravagant. It was rich enough in material to cover the pregnancies of the Régence; it spread throughout all France like a mask of debauchery during these days of folly. A caricature of 1719 shows a street-fair, with stalls and stands of *paniers* disputed and bought by *bourgeoises* deceiving their husbands in order to buy them, by cooks "making the market penny" in order to possess one, by nursemaids and even by old women whose faltering step required the aid of a crutch. For it was a craze against which age was unavailing; during the century it struck even centenarians. We read in the Journal of Verdun for the month of October, 1737, that Louise de Bussy, aged one hundred and eleven, died from the fall she suffered while trying on a *panier*. After caricatures come satire, song and *canard*, "the Turkey-Hen in furbelow" and the "Mie Margot" compared the fashionable woman with her hair very much *tignonné* (dressed in the back), her slight body and her shoulders to an orange tree in its box. This refrain, too, came to be sung in the streets:

Là, là, chantons la prétintaille en falbalas,
 Elles tapent leurs cheveux;
 L'échelle à l'estomac,
 Dans le pied une petite mule
 Qui ne tient pas,
 Habit plus d'étoffe
 Qu'à six carrosses
 Prétintailles.¹

¹Library of the Arsenal, MSS B. L. F. 77bis. A *calotine* of the day: *The Burlesque Decree of the Queen of Fashion concerning paniers, hoops, farth-*

Comedy followed song; and in the *Paniers de la Vieille Précieuse* (1742), we hear Harlequin disguised as a saleswoman of farthingales and *paniers* crying: "I have corfs, hoops, *paniers*, flounces, farthingales, *sacrissins* and *matelas piqués*. For prudes I have solid ones which cannot be raised; I have folding ones for gallants and mixed ones for persons of the third estate. . . . I have, by the grace of God, specimens of all sorts, English, French, Spanish and Italian. . . . I make water-carrier's hoops for roundish waists, corfs for the thin-waisted and lanterns for the Venuses. . . ." But the mode was deaf to this mockery. It resisted even the condemnation of the Church which inspired preachers and doctors with anathema like Menot's calling those who wore *paniers* "she monkeys" and "clerks of the devil." In vain the rectors of the parish, from the eminence of the pulpit, showed women not only all the scandal but the absurdity of their costumes, comparing them to water-carriers with two pails under their skirts, or to taborers hiding a tabour on either side of them. The women continued to frequent churches and returned to sermons holding their *paniers* with either hand, and showing a wooden hoop under their "arrogant and ostentatious" skirts. Convinced that this arrangement gave their figures elegance and majesty and their entire person an air of opulent roundness, they enthusiastically adopted all the inventions of the *panier* invented by *panier-*

ingales and other accessories of Women, rising up against the pernicious custom of ladies running the streets and frequenting the public promenades in flowing dresses, their shoulders and throats bared, willed and commanded that the high collar of Quentin, the *agrafe*, the *lacet*, the *fraise* (ruff), the farthingales of yore and shoes à la Steinkerke be reestablished in their modish and fashionable form and use. A decree promulgated at the *Palace of Pleasure*, on October 16th, 1719, and signed by Venus, attacked the Burlesque decree. It willed and commanded that women and *filles* continue to walk the streets and public promenades in flowing dresses, wearing *panier*, hoop and *criarde* (farthingale). A little pamphlet took up the defense of the much maligned frames, furbelows and *paniers* more seriously. It attacked masculine fashions: men's trousers like pistol-holsters; their lackey's-jackets made into top-coats with the wide, hanging collar, which men then affected; their hats folded like *oublies* (wafers); their wigs in a point with a forelock of four hairs. It ended by stating that with the new fashion women could dress quickly and without help and that they were dressed, so to speak, in undress. (Paris, Press of Valeyre, 1727.)

makers, men and women. What a variety of shapes, what fashions in *paniers*! Some were *en gondole*: these made a woman look like water-carriers: others, no wider below than above, gave her the appearance of a barrel. There were some called *cadets*, because they were not of the legitimate size; they reached only two fingers below the knee. On the contrary *paniers à bourrelets* had a great roll of padding which widened out the skirt. The *paniers à guerdon*, (those that rested on a stand when a woman sat down) were less popular than the *paniers à coudes*, so called because a woman could rest her elbows upon them. These were wider above, they described an oval better; they had five rows of circles,—the first of which was the *traquenard* (trap)—or three rows less than the English *paniers*. The *criardes*, thus named because of the crackle of their gummed material, were worn only by actresses in the theatre and ladies of the very highest society. Moreover, they disappeared soon with the decisive mode of the *panier*, correctly so termed because it resembled a wicker cage for poultry. In the middle of the century, the *panier* was made of a skirt of canvas to which circles of whale-bone were fastened.

Meanwhile caricature continued its pencil warfare against “equivocally raised dresses.” In 1735 it drew the *Distribution of Paniers à la mode by my love Margot in the suburbs of the City of Paris*, with *paniers* three ells long. But the print had not much success. Indeed, so small was the edition that, with a few changes, it reappeared in 1736 with a crown on the head of my love Margot, as an allegoric representation of the union of France and Lorraine. Time availed more than caricature to ruin the fashion of *paniers*; in 1750, almost the only sort remaining was *jansénistes* or half-*paniers*. About ten years later, a dressmaker honored by the custom of most of the great ladies at court, Pamard by name, the man who had invented dresses adorned with artificial flowers each of which bore the odor of a natural flower, dealt a deathblow to *paniers* by the creation of *Considérations*, which gracefully supported a dress without the

help of a certain number of petticoats or of a *panier*. *Considérations* banished *jansénistes*, henceforth reserved solely for Court ceremonies.

Jansénistes! The mode of the age was accustomed to give these strange names, derisive echoes of the passion of an age. Events and scandals, all the important and trifling things that caused French hearts to beat or French lips to smile ironically, left a trace of their echo and as though a glimmer of immortality, in such light and fluttering gim-cracks as a ribbon, a bonnet, a coiffure, baptized with a famous or ridiculous name, christened for victory or disaster, a public joy or a national vengeance, for a word, a sentiment, an idea, a taste, for the occupation or plaything of a people's imagination. The colors of History, worn by Frivolity—such was the fashion of the eighteenth century par excellence.

From the beginning of the century, the mode followed the interests of the moment. As a consequence of the lawsuit of Father Girard, ribbons *à la Cadière* made their appearance. There are three samples of these in the portfolios of the Bibliothèque Nationale: one represents La Cadière giving the Reverend Father a light fillip on the cheek, another shows La Cadière and Father Girard, in bust, separated by a thought. And fans succeeded ribbons. Out of the fire of 1721, when thirty-two streets in Rennes burned down, came women's jewels and trinkets, made of calcinated stones and of the vitrifications of the fire. With the advent of Law and his system, lace galloons "*du système*" were invented. Did an expression, the term "*allure*" (dash) run from mouth to mouth in 1730? At once fans and ribbons "*à l'allure*" appeared and met with such popularity that people continued to wear them even during the Court mourning for the death of the King of Sardinia. The crossing of the Rhine having been effected by the Maréchal de Berwick and the Royal troops, it was celebrated by taffetas of the *passage du Rhin*, undulated like the waters of a river, and by ribbons of the *passage du Rhin*, which,

crudely drawn and as though tattooed on the silk, represented a white or sky-blue musketeer between a white tent and a ruby or emerald tent.

Queen Maria Leczinska's taste for the game of quadrille brought forth ribbons called *quadrille de la Reine*. In 1742, the appearance of a comet produced an entire fashion of articles *à la comète*. A few years later, the arrival of a rhinoceros in France sets all the fashion *à la rhinocéros*. And how many fashions disappeared, swept away by the whim that had brought them or absorbed by some wide and general fashion, such as that *à la Pompadour* which embraced all the folderols of apparel, and the extent and universality of which may be found in a pamphlet published at the Hague under the title: "*Life à la Pompadour or the Quintessence of the Mode, by a True Dutchman.*" Fontenoy gave birth to cockades, Lawfeld to hats. There were bonnets *à la Crevelt*, ribbons *à la Zondorff*, and fans *à la Hokirchen*. The quarrels of the Parliament inspired the *parlement*, a sort of taffeta kerchief with a hood. Towards 1750, when architects abandoned the rugged style for the Greek, the building of the Warehouse loosed that first craze for classical style that dubbed feminine toilettes and coiffures *à la grecque*. Carmontelle derided this great fashion with his projects of men's and women's clothing solely composed of ornaments of the five Greek orders employed in the decoration of buildings. In 1768, the clearing and flood of the Seine filled the hatters' shops with bonnets *à la débâcle*. Was Linguet debarred? Nothing but "barred" ribbons and material were on sale. It was enough for Beaumarchais in a *Mémoire* to immortalize the silhouette of Marin and the fashion immediately created the *quesaco*, which Madame du Barry was almost the first to wear. When Louis XVI ascended the throne and the hope of the people saluted the resurrection of Henry IV, the tailors and the costumers tried to revive the costumes *à la Henry IV*. In May, 1775, the riots arising from the high cost and scarcity of wheat made the furnish-

ers imagine the *bonnet à la révolte*. In November, 1781, the birth of the Dauphin created the vogue of the shade *caca Dauphin* and changed into *Dauphins* the *Jeannettes* women wore at their necks. In the world of women who used tobacco, Turgot's ministry spread tobacco-boxes *à la Turgot*, which were called *Platitudes*. The convulsive ministry of Monteynard inspired the idea of screens *à la Monteynard*, established on a movable but leadened base and rising of themselves. Later, a bonnet without crown was a bonnet *à la caisse d'escompte*, a bonnet with a high-rising crown was a bonnet *à la Montgolfier*. Soon, on the fans carried by the very *dévotés*, Figaro appeared beside the song of the balloons.¹ And the century which began with ribbons *à la Cadière* ended with ribbons *à la Cagliostro*, displaying pyramids on a background of rose.

We abandoned the mode with de Troy. If we take it up again with Lancret, we recapture its essence in the two fine engravings of his work by Dupuis, the "*Glorieux*" and the "*Married Philosopher*." The *coiffure* was still a low one; over it, with a few flowers, a little lace bonnet spread on either side and came to a point at the forehead. Women wore three rows of pearls on their neck, with one large pearl hanging from them, and a necklace, falling in a stream and gliding between their breasts, described two or three loose loops over their *corsages*. The bodice opened on a *corps*, adorned with a ladder of ribbons. On their left side, women wore one of those enormous bouquets, one of those *faggots of flowers* that rose above the shoulder. English cuffs with three rows of ruffles covered their arms and the tops of their gloves which reached the elbow. Their closed dresses, falling in wide, solid and superb folds were trimmed, adorned and ornamented with designs in *chenille* and *tambour-work*, held up by wide knots. Sometimes a woman's dress was made of some such material as

¹ Conversation of the Palais Royale, 1786, Part II.—The vogue of the song about Marlborough had created ribbons, head-dresses and hats *à la Malbrouck*.

shown in the portraits of Maria Leczinska at Versailles, of some one of those purple and gold brocades¹ which shone about a woman's waist with the sheen of a cuirass and which, over her skirt, sowed dazzling peonies and poppies, suns in fire, clusters of grapes, like a masterpiece of the goldsmith's art with flowers, fruits, foliage, twisted fringes and branches of flowers, poured on a carpet of silk. Often, too, her dress was made of that pretty satin of *gridelin* and gold in which Nattier likes to clothe his models and the author of *Angola* his heroines; or it might be a brocade of blue striped with silver, with a bodice of the same color, a petticoat of white satin with lace and fringes of silver, a skirt of the same material as the dress with Spanish lace and silver *compagne*; and, as it rose, the dress would reveal a black silk stocking with a thread of silver on the sides and in the back, and shoes of black morocco, with silver braiding and diamond buckles. An elaborate coquetry, an outlay of riches, a majesty of magnificence, an ensemble of rigidity, majesty and splendor were the characteristics of this ornate feminine costume, the *grand habit* of the Frenchwoman of the eighteenth century. In spite of many innovations of detail and ornamentation, it preserved an established aspect and lines, it modeled itself on a pattern of etiquette, and kept to the last day of the monarchy, a traditional, almost an hieratic form. A collection of the modes furnishes us its design, example and type.

In the gown properly called the *grand habit à la Française* the *décolletée* dress with corset-front stiffened by busks, but without pleats in front, made the body appear isolated and as though in the center of a vast drapery represented by the skirt. The dress, which was no longer the closed, one-piece dress, opened out in a triangle over a sort of under-dress, giving play on either side of the triangle to

¹They went so far as to make dresses of golden material without seams which Maria Leczinska refused because they were too expensive. (*Revue Rétrospective*, Vol. V.)

a large band called *parement*, all trimmed with puffings, cut by *barrières* adorned with buds and bouquets of flowers. The *falbala*, that is to say, the triangle formed by the underdress, left open to view, was cut by a crescent of *barrières*; a bouquet held firm by a floating tassel, formed the middle of it. The short sleeves of the dress had three rows of cuffs. From behind, a collar or a *médicis* of fine, thin black lace rose and surrounded the nape of her neck. Women arranged their coiffure in keeping with this imposing toilette, at once theatrical and regal. The hair was dressed *à la physionomie élevée*, with four detached curls and the *confident* turned down in front of the left ear;¹ she wore pearls at her ears and a row of pearls rested upon her hair, *en bandeau*.

But what a world of inventions on this invariable background! What fantasy, what explorations of taste, what a genius of luxury ceaselessly varied this established and fixed toilette and added still further to its sumptuousness. There were gowns of white *broché* satin, fluted and striped, covered with rosettes, trimmed with gold and *chenille*; there were dresses trimmed with silver and strewn with flowers, adorned with bouquets of lilac and silver plumes; there were dresses with garlands of roses embroidered in knots of large pink spangles and spangled with silver and gold; there were dresses with background of silver, striped with heavy wires of gold, reëmbroidered and bordered in gold, with garlands of carnations and spangles of shaded gold; there were dresses of mosaic satin, spangled with silver, striped and *guilloché* with garlands of myrtle. There were gowns for the trimmings of which the mode at one moment called for the spoil of four thousand jays; there were gowns over which Davaux ran the most resplendent embroideries; there were gowns on which Pagelle, the tailor of the *Traits Galants*, threw *blonds* of silver lace, *barrières*

¹ *Physionomie* or *coque* was that part of the hair which rose from the forehead, *confident* was the loose lock which fell back and was unknotted over her neck.

of *chicorée* caught and held up with jasmine, little bouquets tied with little knots in hollows of embroidered festoons, bracelets, *pompons*—all the prodigious embellishments that brought a dress to the price of 10,000 pounds and made Madame de Matignon pay her tailor a contingent annuity of 600 pounds for one. Indeed, this perhaps proved less expensive than the price the Duchesse de Choiseul paid for the one she had made for Lauzun's marriage: a dress of blue satin, garnished in martin, covered with gold, covered with diamonds, and each diamond of which shone on a star of silver surrounded by a spangle of gold.

But this mode of parade, of magnificence and *éclat*, exacted of women by the etiquette at Court, was maintained only by tradition. From the beginning to the end of the century, it struggled against a contrary fashion which gained ground each day. Invention in adornment and the true taste of woman turned, during this whole age that sought for habiliments of painted cloth,¹ towards the coquetry of the *déshabillé* and the charm of the *négligé*. Her ambition, her dream and her effort were above all to appear as though rising from her bed. She thought she had more to gain by this; and she resolved to return to the graces of nature for a thousand minor reasons of so tenuous a subtlety and of so schooled a trickery that Marivaux alone could penetrate and disentangle them. According to the expression of the time, she became less precious and more affecting. She came to please without outside help, through herself, or at least, through what disguised her the least. She could say: "Here

¹It seems that this mode of painted cloths was still further enlivened, excited and irritated by the severity of its prohibitive orders of arrest; by the law of protection in favor of wool and silk manufacturers; by the strict orders given to employees and guards of barriers to tear these from the backs of women; by the fines levied upon actresses who wore them on the stage. It was a general taste, protected by the Court, authorised by the example of Madame de Pompadour, who refused to have a single piece of furniture in her château Bellevue which was not contraband. (Correspondence of Grimm, Vol. XVI.)

am I, such as Nature made me." What she displayed as though by negligence or by mistake, possessed the irritant charm of a modest and veiled copy of the original; and the veil she kept proved to be so frail and transparent, that it practically ceased to be an obstacle for man.

With the exception of ceremonious and conventional dress, if we follow the costume of women during the eighteenth century, we find a trend towards the *négligé* from the first years of Louis XV's reign. In the intimacy of home and bedroom, a woman wore the *déshabillé*, the liberty and ease of which she dared not yet display in public. At home, she wore a coat of muslin, tight over a *décolleté* corset with a short skirt whose furbelows discovered the lower part of her leg. A pink *désespoir* (kerchief) knotted coquettishly under her chin, rose *en fanchon* under her charming *battant l'œil*. Or else, wearing a round bonnet of the most beautiful stitch in the world, trimmed with rose-colored ribbons, she showed, under a bed-jacket of the thinnest material, a corset trimmed in front and on all its seams with *frisé* lace, mixed, from space to space, with tufts of *soucis d'hanneton*,¹ of the same color as the ribbons of her bonnet and of the knots at her cuffs, pink, like the rest of her costume, like the trimmings of her bed, quilt and her pillows. For the *fontange*, a mode which began with a ribbon knotted around a bonnet, now became the fashion in all things. From the head, where flowers and diamonds replaced it, it descended and spread over the entire body and apparel of woman; from one end to the other, it enribboned formal or *négligé* costumes; of all woman's toilette it became the

¹ The *soucis d'hanneton* almost gave birth to the corporation of the *Agri-ministes*, first termed modestly trimmers. Through the vogue this work of fancy trimming obtained, through the inventions and perfections the fashion demanded of it, they included a great number of men and women workers in the suburbs of Saint Denis and Saint Martin. Beside *chenille*, *cordonnet*, *milanèse*, silver and pearls, they manufactured aigrettes, pompons, corsage bouquets, bouquets to place in the hair, etc., and the trimmings known as *fougères* because of their perfect resemblance to the fern. (Historical Dictionary of the City of Paris and its suburbs by Hurtant and Magny, 1779, Vol. I.)

compulsory ornament and supreme achievement, which the eighteenth century called *petit oye*.¹

Little by little, women grew bolder with the *négligé*. They began the renovation of their costumes before the reign of Louis XVI by dresses *à la Tronchin*, and *à la Hollandoise*, brought to France, according to chronicles, by the beautiful Madame Pater. They welcomed with enthusiasm everything that discovered the waist, and deprived them of what had made them look like "walking honey-bees." From this came the universal vogue of *polonaises*, of *circassiennes*, of *caracos*, of *lévites* and of *chemises*, adapted to each rank, and changing so perpetually that they emptied every husband's purse. The *caracos* copied from the *bourgeoises* of Nantes when the Duc d'Aiguillon passed through in 1768, were the first to arrive. Worn at first very long, later cut at the slit of the pockets of the underskirt, the *caraco*, pleated in the back like the *robe à la française*, was in fact simply the top of that dress. It was a walking-dress women wore as they held a high ebony cane with ivory handle in one hand, and, with the other, pressed a little dog, with forelock held by a favor of pink ribbon, under their arm. The *polonaise*, gallant and light, succeeded the *caraco*. It was worn as a little morning or country-dress. It was a sort of over-dress, hooked under the *parfait contentement*, tucked up behind; sometimes its skirt was full, sometimes the back was rounded, with wide-spreading panels. It was generally made of fine-striped India taffeta, trimmed with smooth gauze, with a flounce of puffed gauze, and with *sabots* of puffed gauze at the sleeves. A hat shaped like a Basque tabor, and a gauze collar with fluted border completed the costume. There was also a winter *polonaise* with pockets and a hood adorned with a great flounce and with *sabots à petits bons-*

¹The ribbons and trimmings and adornments that make a costume complete are frequently called *petite oie*. *Ornatus adjectus*. The *petite oie* frequently costs more than the suit. The *petite oie* consists of the ribbons that garnish the hat, the sword-knot, the stockings, the gloves, etc. "Que vous semble de ma *petite oie*?" *Molière* (Trévoux's Dictionary).

hommes. A little muff,¹ a hat à *la biscâïenne*, with three ostrich plumes, and watch-cordon falling over the stomach, trimmed with tufts of hair and of gold with *apanages* hanging as fobs, accompanied the latter. Then came the *polonaise à sein ouvert*, indiscreet and voluptuous, displaying a throat half veiled by a kerchief of folded gauze. In addition to these *polonaises* there were the *demi-polonaises*, or *polonaises à la liberté*, which were copied from the bottom of dresses invented a long time before by the ladies at Court, obliged by etiquette to appear in public in the morning. The *demi-polonaise* was simply a skirt over which was tied a *queue de japonaise* usually tucked up; it gave a woman the appearance of being dressed when she was not. The *circassienne*, cut on the model of the long-sleeved Circassian surcoat, differed but little from the *polonaise* in design. Most generally, it was made of a gauze dress with three gold galloons, held up by bouquets of flowers opening on a skirt which veiled an underskirt of a different color: the color of this underskirt was repeated by the color of the point of the upper-coat. Neither mantlet, *fichu*, nor cape was thrown over this aëry toilette, made for the great heats of summer and revealing the naked breasts to the eye. A few *élégantes* added merely a necklace in gold and hair falling in two

¹Furs were a great luxury for Parisians in the age when it was the fashion to arrive at the Opera clad in the most superb and rare specimens and to take them off one by one with artful coquetry. The vogue of sable, ermine, squirrel, lynx and otter is indicated in the *Fur Handsels dedicated to Chilly Young Women, Geneva, 1770*. Muffs had quite a history from these a furrier discredited by having the hangman wear one on the day of execution—these must have been *manchons à la jésuite*, muffs that were not of fur and against which a jest of the early century, *Request addressed to the Pope by the Master Furriers* solicits excommunication—down to the furs and muffs of Angora goats, immense muffs that reached to the ground and to the diminutive furs of the end of the century, called “little barrels” just as the *palatine* was called “cat”. The fashion of sleighs, then much in vogue, added further to the fashion of furs. A water-color by Caylus from a drawing made by Coypel towards the middle of the century, shows us a sleigh laid on dolphins—one of those which cost ten thousand crowns—with a beautiful lady clad all in fur (even to a small fur bonnet with an aigrette), driven by a coachman, posted high behind, dressed as a Muscovite. The *palatine*, incidentally, owed its name and fortune to the Duchess d’Orléans, mother of the Regent, known as the Princess Palatine.

tassels on the galloons. The hat accompanying this costume was a hat *à la coquille* or *au char de Vénus*. After the *circassiennes*, the dressmakers rediscovered the costume of the tribe consecrated to the guardianship of the Tabernacle, the *Lévite*, a dress whose folds swept the pavement of the temple of Jerusalem. It was a mere sheath which enveloped the body or outlined its shape. The Vicomtesse de Jaucourt tried to restore it by a curiously twisted train: but its invention drew such a crowd at the Gardens of the Luxembourg that the porters of Monsieur begged her to go out, and the *lévite* with its monkey's tail lasted but a day. Finally came the *chemises*, a mode which seems to be the first efforts and beginnings of the bold Dirétoire fashions: there were *chemises à la Jésus*, the *chemises à la Floricourt*, *chemises* lined with rose in which women simulated nakedness.

In this age French taste hovered abroad and alighted all over Europe. All Europe lived *à la française*. All Europe was meekly subsidiary to our modes, tributary to our arts, commerce, and industry. Here was an infatuation for the French genius and a domination that the *Galerie des Modes* attributed not to caprice but to "the inventive spirit of French ladies in all that concerns adornment and, above all, in that subtle, delicate taste, characterizing the veriest *bagatelles* that fall from their hands." The glance of all Europe was fixed on the famous doll in the Rue Saint Honoré, a doll in the latest fashion, in the latest adornment, and of the latest invention, a changing picture of the coquetry of the day. This life-sized doll was ceaselessly dressed, undressed and redressed at the will of a new whim, born at a supper of *petites maîtresses*, in the dressing room of a dancer at the Opéra or of an actress of the Rampart, in the workshop of a good dressmaker. Repeated and multiplied, this mannequin crossed mountain and sea, it went to England, to Germany, to Italy and to Spain: from the Rue Saint Honoré, it darted into the world and reached even the inmost harem. And when

the journals of fashion were founded, they speculated far more on the European *clientèle* than on the French public. Their hope and ambition were to take the place of the Rue Saint Honoré doll and their prefaces announced that "thanks to them, foreigners will no longer be obliged to make dolls or mannequins, always imperfect and very expensive, which at most cast but the shadow of our fashions."

In this universal, tyrannical and absolute triumph of French taste, what a fortune for men and women vendors and for the great dressmakers! What sway a Bertin, called by the age "the minister of fashions," was able to exercise. And what artists' vanities and insolences! The anecdotes and *memoires* of the century have preserved their answer to a lady who was dissatisfied with what was shown her: "Kindly present to Madame some samples of my latest work for her Majesty" and their haughty words to Monsieur de Toulangeon who complained of their high prices: "Is Vernet paid simply for his canvas and paints?" It was the age of fashion's great fortunes when people spoke of the company of the Queen's rouge merchant, of Madame Martin's set at the Temple. This was the reign of artists of all sort, of modistes of genius, as well as of sublime bootmakers, unique in "presenting" a foot and setting it off, in giving it the exiguity and grace, the turn and the dexterity so much vaunted and appreciated, so often sung by the eighteenth century, that indefinable quality of the foot of Madame Lévêque, the silk merchant at the *Ville de Lyon* which inspired Rétif de la Bretonne with his story, *The Foot of Fanchette*. From a woman's foot, the adulation of the age went to the men who shod it in those charming shoes of all colors, with tongues, bows, buckles and embroideries, in those shoes of white druggat with golden flowers, or those shoes with a *venez y voir*, trimmed with emeralds.¹ We have examples of the na-

¹The Venez-y-voir was the habit of heels. Like dresses and hats, shoes received their ornamentation from political events and considerations. Thus

ture, attitude and tone of these workmen, spoiled by fashion, with no modesty left save the impertinence of the *petit maître*. Going to the shop of one of them to order a pair of shoes for a lady in the country, the Chevalier de Luzerne was introduced into a charming little room. There he admired an extremely rich work-chest, its compartments decorated with portraits of the first ladies of the land: the Princesse de Guéménée, Madame de Clermont, etc. While he looked, ecstatic: "Monsieur, it is very good of you to be paying attention to these things," said the artist, the great Charpentier, as he entered clad in the most gallant of *négligés*. And as Monsieur de Luzerne exclaimed: "What taste! What elegance!" "Monsieur," resumed Charpentier, "this is the retreat of a man who likes to enjoy things. . . . I live here like a philosopher. Upon my word, sir, it is true that certain among these ladies pay me kind attentions, they give me their portraits; you see that I am grateful, and that I have not placed them unfavorably." Then on the model of the shoes the Chevalier presented him: "Ah, I know that! I know that pretty foot! A man would walk twenty miles to see it. Do you know that, after the little Guéménée, your friend has the prettiest foot in the world?" And as the Chevalier was about to retire "Without ceremony, if you are not engaged, do stay and sup with us. There is my wife, a pretty woman—and I am expecting several other very charming ladies of our company. We are playing Oedipus after dinner. . . ." Nor was Charpentier alone in possessing this supreme impertinence; he shared it with Bourbon, the shoemaker in the Rue des Vieux Augustins, who purveyed to the Court and shod the pretty foot of Madame de Marigny. In a black suit and silk vest, with a well powdered *perruque* on his head, this man must be heard telling a great lady: "You have a *melting* foot, Madame

is 1781, at the birth of the Dauphin, when *dauphins* replaced *jeannettes* enriched with diamonds on the throats of women, their shoes were adorned by a knot with four rosettes, surmounted by a crown, in the center of which was a dolphin.

la Marquise. . . .” And with what an air he takes up the shoe made by his predecessor and utters contemptuously: “Where on earth have you been for your shoes?”

But what were this pride and fortune of the shoemaker in the eighteenth century compared to the pride and fortune of the *coiffeur*? His were the vanity and importance not only of an artist but of an inventor; they seemed to surpass the pretensions of the artist in footwear by all the span between the head and foot of the woman. The *coiffeur*! He considered and called himself a ‘creator’ in this age, when, of all the fashions, that of the hair grew old the most quickly—so quickly indeed, that Léonard had become accustomed to saying “formerly” for “yesterday!”

In 1714, at the King’s supper at Versailles, the two English ladies, whose *paniers* were to be copied, attracted the King’s glance by their low *coiffures* which had created a scandal and had almost caused them to be sent away. The King was heard to say that if French ladies were reasonable, they would not dress their hair otherwise. The word was picked up; and that night was spent in cutting three rows of *cornettes* from the *coiffure*; only one was left, which was lowered even more, so that on the morrow, the ladies of the Court went to the King’s Mass with *coiffures* in the English fashion, heedless of the laughter of the ladies with high *coiffure*, who were not in the secret of the day before. A compliment addressed by the King, as he left Mass, to the ladies who had been ridiculed, put the crowning touch to the metamorphosis of the Court: every high *coiffure* disappeared.¹

This fashion of low *coiffures* caused women to cut their hair three fingers from their heads. They abandoned their *cornettes*, fastening their hair with pins very far back at the top of their heads and curling it in big ringlets, in imitation of men. They had men’s wigmakers dress their

¹ Saint Simon tells us that in 1719, women wore *coiffures* which were called *commodes*. These were not attached and were put on like men’s night-caps.

hair. Madame de Genlis was wrong when she spoke of Larseneur as the first *coiffeur* tending the hair of women resigned to allowing a man's hand to touch their heads on the day of their presentation. Larseneur had a celebrated forerunner baptized with the predestined name of Frison. This Frison, discovered by Madame de Cursay, made the vogue by Madame de Prie, was the *perruquier* of fashion, the artist who alone possessed the confidence of women at Court, the *coiffeur par excellence*, appealed to by la Dodun—wife of the Comptroller-General, swollen with pride over her brand new marquisate, (the marquisate d'Herbault) and not caring a straw for the song:

La Dodun dit à Frison :
 Coiffez-moi avec adresse,
 Je prétends avec raison
 Inspirer de la tendresse.
 Tignonnez, tignonnez, bichonnez-moi,
 Je vauz bien une duchesse,
 Tignonnez, tignonnez, bichonnez-moi.
 Je vais souper chez le Roi!

And this Frison, who had no pupils, caused such jealousies that Guigne, the King's barber, disguised himself as a lackey of Madame de Resson's in order to surprise his secret and see him at work; but Frison recognized him and mystified him by dressing the lady's hair as badly as he could. Dage succeeded Frison; he was launched by Madame de Chateauroux and protected by the Dauphine, daughter-in-law of Louis XV. It was to Dage that Madame de Pompadour was forced to make advances to have him dress her hair. He it was who replied to the favorite, when she asked him the reason for his reputation: "I used to dress the *other's* hair!" a saying which met with great success in the Dauphine's circle.

The great success and glory of the earliest ladies' hair-dressers were won, it is true, with slight pains. At the end of the eighteenth century, talents very different from Fri-

son's (which turned ceaselessly in the same circle of simplicity, exercised themselves solely on *coiffures* without preparation and bowed so slavishly to nature) were required of a *coiffeur*. Indeed, during the entire beginning of the century, hair-dressing remained practically at a standstill¹: it consisted almost solely in a low *coiffure* with kinky curls, on which rested a plume, a diamond or a little bonnet with hanging plumes. The whole change time brought to women's heads was the forsaking of kinky curls and a barely noticeable raising of the *coiffure*, which, however, remained flat, until the advent and revelations of Legros, who began the great revolution of fashions in hairdressing. From the kitchen, from the ovens of the Comte de Bellemare, he rose to the direction of the academy where he held three classes; where he showed valets, ladies' maids and women hairdressers that art of "*coeffer à fond*," in which they trained their hand on the heads of young girls of the common people who were paid twenty sols.

From 1763 on Legros made himself known, illustrating his principles by means of thirty dolls, all of them with *coiffures*, which he exposed at the Foire Saint-Ovide. In 1765 one hundred dolls, exhibited at his shop, display the whole doctrine of this new art, based on the proportion of the head and the character of the face. The same year he published his *Art of the Coiffure of French Ladies*, in which he boasted of the invention of forty-two *coiffures* applauded by Court and Town, he demonstrated in twenty-eight prints all the happy contrasts that can be effected, with a *tape* in the still low and flat *coiffure*, by means of curls at an angle, curls in a ribboned-knot, fan-joint curls, curls on wires, kinky locks imitating lace of Hungary, inverted curls, locks shaped like shells, rosettes and snails, thin and complicated *coiffures* which looked like

¹ *The Causeries d'un Curieux* by Monsieur Feuillet de Conches tell us that, towards 1740, the Frenchwoman had a passion for hair cut short and rolled into curls around the head as on a perruque: a *coiffure* the wits called *mirliton* (reed-pipe).

a *dragonne* (sword-knot), with its two tassels unrolled, falling over one shoulder of a Roman Empress with hair curled in small ringlets. Here was the first impetus and the early trend of the new mode, a point of departure for inventions and theories that made the art of dress adapt itself to a new element of grace, namely, the physiognomy of each individual. So philosophy of the toilette gave coquetry the counsels and laws of esthetics. The century was in the process of discovering that the toilette of a beautiful woman must be entirely epic, epic like the Muse of Virgil; it must be free from all manner of frippery or bedizenment, it must have nothing that resembled modern *concetti*; in a word, it must be exactly contrary to the toilette of a pretty woman. When the charm of a woman rose from a certain air, from some indefinable quality in all her person, from what we can only call a "*je ne sais quoi*," she was unworthy of pleasing, unless she sought out every fantasy capable of attracting and unless in her attire she illustrated at one time the taste of the sonnet, at another the taste of the madrigal or of the *rondeau*, and even the piquancy of the epigram, indeed all the graces of the lesser genres made for her irregular features and her sparkling eyes.

In 1763, the same year that Legros exhibited his dolls at the Foire Saint-Ovide, there appeared the "Encyclopedia of the Carcass or Table of Coiffures à la Mode engraved from the Designs of the Petites Maîtresses of Paris," a little book which is a rarity to-day. Was this baroque book which bore as a sub-title: "Introduction to the knowledge of lengthening-pieces, pompons, curl-papers, blondes, (silk lace) marlis, (catgut, i. e. threaded gauze) carmine, cerise-white, mouches, (patches) grimaces to make one weep, grimaces to make one laugh, billets-doux, bitter grimaces and all the artillery of Cupid," an irony? The Encyclopedia of the Carcass contained illustrations of forty-four *coiffures* the most curious of which were: *à la Cabriolet*, *à la Maupeou*, *à la Baroque*, *à l'Accouchée*, *à la Petit*

Coeur, à la Pompadour, à la Chausse-Trappe, à la Jamais Vu.

Renewed in principle, the art of headdressing became the field of imagination and emulation. Frédéric, another ladies' *coiffeur*, rose to fame. He proved a formidable rival to the ex-cook, whose taste ladies of quality had never been willing to recognize and against whom they nourished feelings of rancor because he revealed how they lost a great part of their hair through laziness in combing their platted knots which they often kept for a week or a fortnight without ever a combing. The *coiffures* of Legros were soon abandoned to the *filles* and courtesans; Legros himself disappeared before the legion of *coiffeurs* in red vests, in black breeches and gray silk stockings, who swarmed over Paris and dressed hair at Versailles. So great was their vogue and so rapidly did they multiply, that the corporation of Perruquiers, who had the monopoly of dressing women's hair, causes several *coiffeurs* to be fined and imprisoned. At once appeared a "Deposition by the Coiffeurs of the ladies of Paris against the community of Master-Barbers, Wig-Makers, Bathers and Washers," likening the free art of the ladies' *coiffeur* to that of the poet, painter and sculptor, enumerating all the talents, the "science of light and shade" and the knowledge of half-tones required to conciliate the color of the dressing with the tone of a woman's flesh, to distribute shadows, to give more life to her complexion and more expression to her grace. This complaint in which the *coiffeurs* invoked the patronage of a comet, the hair of Bérénice, was backed up by a poem: the *Art of the Ladies' Coiffeur against the mechanism of Wig-Makers at the toilette of Cytherea*, 1765, which asked that wig-makers, those "workmen mechanics," be left "to wallow in the mire":

"Between the soap and scrubby wig."

A second pamphlet soon followed, in which the *coif-*

feurs of the ladies of Paris, twelve hundred in number, giving themselves the title of "first officers of the toilette of a woman" argued against the wig-makers on the frequent changes of wig-makers' assistants, who constantly went from one shop to another, without presenting sufficient guarantee for a ministry of confidence such as theirs. The quarrel became a great success; even women hairdressers took part. A complaint was published at Rouen in which the Women Hairdressers, Capmakers and Beauticians claimed the execution of the status drawn up in their favor in the year 1478, and declared loftily that it was a profanation to allow the hands of a wig-maker to touch a woman's head. The *coiffeurs'* party, which grew each day, and was supported by the women and all the *élégantes* of Paris, won a spectacular victory in the end; a declaration was issued at Versailles and registered by Parliament, allowing *coiffeuses* to continue among the common people and *bourgeoises*, but adding six hundred ladies' *coiffeurs* to the community of Master-Barbers and Wig-Makers. Furthermore, to bring back the *coiffeurs* to the fixed number of six hundred and to prevent them from putting *Académie de Coiffeurs* on their ensigns a Decree of Privy Council was soon found necessary.

During this great struggle, Legros died. He was smothered on the Place Louis XV during the festivities given in honor of the marriage of Marie-Antoinette. Paris mourned him no more than did his wife, and the names of Léonard and of Lagarde and the *Treatise of the Principles of the Art of Dressing the Hair of Woman* completed the oblivion of his book and name by opening the new era of French hair-dressing. It was the most astounding, the maddest, the most changeable and the most extravagant mode of hair-dressing, ingenious to the point of monstrosity, possessing characteristics of the motto, the *Selam*, the allusion, the riddle and the family portrait; this fashion, a prodigious potpourri of all the fashions of the eighteenth century, was worked over, renewed, ceaselessly refined, perfected,

adapted and readapted every week, every day, almost every hour, by the inventive powers of six hundred ladies' *coiffeurs*, of the women-hairdressers, of the shop of the *Traits Galants*, of all vendors of fashion articles who must furnish novelty under penalty of closing up their shops. Ideas hovering in the air and passing through the period; the event of the day; the great man of the moment; the current absurdity; the success of an animal, a play, or a song; the war that was being discussed, the curiosity that was attracting people; the lightning flash or the plaything that occupies a society or a child,—all these create or christen a *coiffure*. We are indeed far from the age when there were intervals of some years between fashions, and a *Courrier de la mode* (1768) had to be founded to draw three bonnets a year from the titles of Comic Operas (*bonnets à la Clochette, à la Gertrude and à la Moissoneuse*).¹ At the death of Louis XV, what were three *coiffures* for a whole year? At the slightest whim the names and shapes of this form of architecture change and grow amid the great applause of men. The high *coiffures*, in the judgment of the age, lent a character to faces which possessed none; they attenuated the features, they rounded out the faces of Parisian women, too square in shape, lengthening them to an oval and disguising their usual irregularity.

Allegory reigned; the *coiffure* became a rustic poem, an Opera stage-setting, a panoramic view, an opticorama. The fashion drew its inspiration for head-dresses from gardens, hothouses and orchards, from the fields, from kitchen gardens and even from herb-shops: gooseberries, cherries, *pommes d'api*, red-and-white-heart cherries and even bunches of couch grass or squitch adorned the hair or the

¹In 1772, in his *Praise of Coiffures, addressed to Ladies*, the Chevalier of the order of Saint-Michel, after a long enumeration of *coiffures*, declares that he had used only the thirty-ninth book of *coiffures à la mode*, which alone contains six prints, and each print six figures: total for a single volume ninety-six ways to dress the hair and grand-total for the thirty-nine volumes, three thousand seven hundred and forty-four modes for the head alone.



Photo Girardon

CARMONTELLE—*Mesdames les Comtesses
de Fitz-James et du Nolesin*

bonnets of women. Their heads became landscapes, platbands, groves, with brooks running through, with shepherds, shepherdesses and sheep appearing in them. There were bonnets à *la Parterre* and *au Parc Anglais*. This prodigious folly of composite and fabricated *coiffures*, arranged as tableaux, designed, like the tail-pieces of books, as pictures of towns, little models of Paris, a globe or the heavens, was painted to the life by the *coiffeur* Duppefort in his comedy, *Les Panaches*. Here he wrote of *élégantes* wishing to have on their heads the garden of the Palais Royal with its fountain and the outline of its houses, without forgetting the great alley, the grille, and the café; of widows asking him for a tasteful catafalque and little Cupids playing with hymeneal torches; of women wishing to wear on their heads an entire celestial system in motion: the sun and moon, planets, the Pleiades and the Milky Way; of lovers who wished to parade before their gallants capped by a Bois de Boulogne garnished with animals or by a military review of the King's Household Guards. Nor can we accuse caricature of exaggeration. Was it not said that Beaulard has just invented and dressed the sea on the head of the wife of an English admiral: a sea of Lilliput, made of ripples of gauze, with a microscopical fleet, Brimborion's squadron, made of scraps of material? Did not the *Pouf au Sentiment*, the *coiffure* of the heart, appear early in 1774, in the *salons* and at the play—that incredible head-dress “infinitely superior,” said the age, “to all the *coiffures* which have preceded it by virtue of the multitude of matters which enter into its composition and which must ever be relative to what one likes the most”? Here is a description of the one worn by the Duchesse de Chartres. In the rear was a woman seated in an armchair, holding a nursling; this represented Monsieur le Duc de Valois and his nurse. At the right was a parrot pecking at a cherry, on the left a little negro, the two pet beasts of Madame la Duchesse. And the whole was interwoven with locks of hair of all Madame de Chartres' relatives, her hus-

band, her father, her father-in-law, the Duc de Chartres, the Duc de Penthièvre, and the Duc d'Orléans.

The vogue was for graphic *coiffures*; at the death of Louis XV appeared the *coiffures à la Circonstance* which mourned the King by means of a cypress and a cornucopia laid on a sheaf of wheat; there was also the *coiffures à la Inoculation*, where the triumph of vaccination was represented by a snake, a club, a rising sun, and an olive-tree covered with fruit.

It seemed as though France, during these years, was jealous of the inventions of ancient Rome, of the three hundred *coiffures* of the wife of Marcus Aurelius. Those which have left a name are countless. There were the *coiffures à la Candeur* and *à la Frivolité*; the *Chapeau tigre* and *à la Baigneuse*, (a *coiffure* for the megrims) the *bonnet au Colisée*, *à la Gabrielle de Vergy*, *à la Corne d'Abondance*, the *bonnet au Mystère*, the *bonnet au Becquet*, the *bonnet à la Dormeuse*, *à la Crête de Coq*, the *Chien Couchant*, the *chapeau à la caravane*, the *Pouf à la Puce*, the *Pouf à l'Asiatique*, the *coiffure aux Insurgents*, which imitated a snake so well that the government, to spare the nerves of ladies, forbade it to be exhibited. There were the *casque anglais* adorned with pearls, the *bonnet à la Pouponne*, the *bonnet au Berceau d'Amour*, the *bonnet à la Crèche*, the *bonnet à la Belle-Poule* which bore a frigate with all its sails unfurled; the *coiffure à la Mappemonde* which designed exactly on the hair the five parts of the world, the *Zodiacale* which poured the heavens, the moon and the stars on a sky of blue taffeta, and the *Aigrette-Parasol* which opened out and protected the wearer from the sun. There were the *coiffures à la Minerve* and *à la Flore*, *coiffures* for all the goddesses of antiquity, *coiffures* named after Columbus, Raucourt, la Granville, la Cléophile, Voltaire and Jeannot of the Variétés Amusantes. And there were also the *Parnassienne*, the *Chinoise*, the *Calypso*, the *Thérèse*, (which was the *coiffure* of transition between the *coiffure* of mature years and old age) the *Syracusaine*, the *Ailes de Pa-*

pillon, the *Voluptueuse*, the *Dorlotte*, the *Toque chevelue*; finally, the *Calèche*, a *coiffure* which killed mantlets and hoods. It was this *coiffure* whose advantages Diderot's daughter, still a child, explained so well to him. "What is that on your head that makes you fat as a pumpkin?" asked the father.—"It is a *calèche*."—"But nobody can possibly see you when you bury yourself in the depths of this *calèche*, as you call it."—"So much the better; people look at me all the more."—"So you like to be looked at, eh?"—"It does not displease me."—"Then you are coquettish?"—"A little. Someone says: It is not bad. Someone else says: It is really very pretty. You come back home with all these little compliments and it is quite pleasant."—"Look here, you clear out of here, you and your *calèche*!"—"Oh, well, why not let us have our way? We know what is becoming to us, and, believe me, a *calèche* has its little advantages."—"And what may these advantages be?"—"First, the glances appear fleeting; the top of the face is in the shadow; the bottom appears the whiter for it; and then the fullness of this contraption makes the face dainty."

For a moment this craze for extravagant *coiffures* was threatened and halted by the vogue of the *hedgehog*, a relatively simple *coiffure* which circled the hair, raised and brought to a point with merely a ribbon. But immediately, the modistes grew frightened at their empty shops; they redoubled in efforts and display. The mode reappeared, madder than ever, causing a *chignon* ordered of the wig-maker of the Opéra by la Saint-Huberti to rise to the price of two hundred and thirty-two pounds. There were additional elaborations and prodigious plume-work which enriched the plume-vendors. A single foreign town, Genoa, where the Duchesse de Chartres showed her plumes, netted them an order of fifty-thousand pounds in one fell swoop. Scaffoldings of hair rose higher and higher still; they managed to surpass in height the *Monte au Ciel coiffures* illustrated by tall figures exposed in August, 1772, in a café at the Foire Saint-Ovide, and awakening much

derisive laughter in the crowds who thronged to see them. Now was the period of *coiffures* so majestically monumental that women were forced to bend double when riding in their coaches, indeed to kneel down; indeed the French and English caricatures were not exaggerating at all when they showed *coiffeurs* perched on ladders in order to give one last touch of the comb to crown the work. The doors of apartments were barely high enough to allow these walking edifices to pass; they seemed always about to make a gap wherever they passed. But Beaulard found a remedy by a stroke of genius: he invented mechanical headdresses. When she had to pass through a low door or enter a coach, the wearer could touch a spring and make them collapse as much as one foot. They were called *à la grand'mère*, because they saved one the reprimands of one's grandparents: a young person, presenting herself before them, pushed the spring; then, when the old woman's back was turned, (the *fée Dentue*, as the age calls her) the *coiffure*, in the twinkling of an eye, rose one foot, or even two, higher.

Beaulard! We must not pass by this great name without pausing a moment. In this age, he was the modiste without parallel, the creator and the poet; he deserved to be honored by the dedication of the poem of the *Fashions*, because of his myriad inventions and his delicious names for fripperies, names that might well have been brought back from Cytherea by the Chevalier de Mouhy or Andrea de Nerciat: ribbons called *aux soupîrs de Vénus*; diadems called *arc-en-ciel*, *le désespoir d'opale*, *l'instant*, *la conviction*, *la marque d'espérance*; trimmings *à la composition honnête*, *à la grande réputation*, *au desir marqué*, *aux plaintes indifférentes*, *à la préférence*, *au doux sourire*, *à l'agitation*; and the material called *soupîrs étouffés*, trimmed with *regrets inutiles*,—without reckoning all the combinations and arrangements of shades imagined by him and emerging from his besieged shop whence originated the colors one had to wear: *vive bergère*, *cuisse de nymphe émue*, *entraîlles de petit maître*.

For in the midst of this fashion, which changed, turned and moved continually, from time to time there were great currents of color which passed and weighed upon it. Suddenly one tone reigned everywhere. Now it was the color *boue de Paris*, now *merde d'oie*, now *puce*. It sufficed to wear *puce* in 1775 according to Besenval, to make one's fortune at Court; this color was recalled at every page of Dorat's novel *Vulsidor and Zulmènie*, christened by Louis XVI, it was multiplied by the imagination of dyers into all sorts of derivations and nuances: *ventre de puce en fièvre de lait*, *vieille puce*, *jeune puce*, *dos*, *ventre-cuisse* and *tête de puce*.¹

But now at the height of its triumph, *puce* was killed by the color *cheveux de la Reine*, born of a delicate comparison made by Monsieur concerning the satins presented to Marie-Antoinette. At Monsieur's words, a sample lock of her pretty ash-blond hair was dispatched to the Gobelins, to Lyons and to the great factories; and a shade, similar to pale gold, which the looms sent back, dressed France in the colors of the Queen for a whole year. Nor was this the only invention of the mode to which Marie Antoinette's beauty serves as a godmother and brings assured success. As soon as she arrived in France, women adopted, under the name of *coiffure à la Dauphine*, the *coiffure* which gave the hair, high and spreading over the forehead, the appearance of a peacock's tail. In 1776, women strove for the *coiffure* called the *Lever de la Reine* and *Pouf à la Reine*. Wide puffed *fichus*, which were compared to broad-footed pigeons, were cut on the model of the *fichus* worn by the Queen as she rose from her confinement. The Queen's name was given to a dress invented by Sarrazin, "costumer to their Highnesses, Our Lords the Princes, and Director in Ordinary of the Salon du Colisée"; and at the birth of her

¹ See the Almanach Svelte 1779 for the origin of the fashion of this color in the exclamation of a woman considering "on her nail of a brilliant white, bordered with a more vivid red" the carcass of the lifeless insect: "Behold, ladies, the color of this flea. It is of a black which is not black, it is of a brown which is not brown. In truth, here is a delightful color."

second son a trimming called *nouveau désiré* was added to it. Finally through the influence of her example, she substituted the fashion of lace ruffles, row upon row, over a dress of plain satin, for the fashion of pompons and feathers and the gewgaws of formal Court dress.

Towards 1780, a great revolution occurred in the mode. It was the revolution of simplicity, amid which Walpole, passing by in a carriage decorated with little Cupids, looked to himself like the grandfather of Adonis. While men abandoned the custom of the *habit à la française*, the hat under the arm, the sword at one side, and almost never appeared in this elaborate costume, save at ceremonial assemblies, marriages, grand balls and formal repasts, women forsook dresses of pomp. They covered neck and throat; they cut off their trains, that dragged an ell behind them. They put off their great *paniers*; and only to give their figure a certain fullness, they wore little *coudes* at their pockets. Gown or dress was no longer a magnificent *décor* full of bombast, majestic through the development and extravagance of its ornaments. They even gave up their scaffoldings of hair; they wore a bonnet, instead; of all the classical French toilette, they kept only the *corps*. The renovation is complete. It went from head to foot. On their heads, women no longer wore a pound of white powder. They had at last become convinced that this profusion of powder widened and hardened their features; that it made blondes insipid and blackened the complexion of brunettes. *Coiffures* now held a mere suspicion of powder and even then, it was attenuated, extinguished with blond or ochre powder. Finally came a change which dismayed Rétif de la Bretonne: women no longer wore high-heeled shoes. It might be that the fashion was affected by Winslow, the anatomist, who observed that high-heels made the calves of a lady of quality rise too high, a development which did not occur with dancers who wore flat shoes. The new vogue of flat shoes altered the voluptuous and swaying gait of women, who walked on mules with the direct and

cavalierly gait of man. The feminine mode was now ingenious only in its search for simplicity. Dressmakers and tailors worked only to copy the masculine and the English mode, its two models of simplicity. All dresses became simple: *chemises*, *robes à l'anglaise*, *à la turque*, *à la créole*, *à la janséniste*, and *robes à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau* "analogous to the principles of this author," dresses of drugget with a gold ring at the neck. The hair was arranged *en Catogan*, *à la conseillère*, like the wigs of men-at-law; women no longer wore heavy hats but only a garland of roses. The *redingote*, the parted waistcoat, and a necktie instead of a neckerchief, was the current costume, at the hour when morning-dress became the costume of the day and when the women presented themselves in *casaquins* at Ministers' audiences. The Court itself and the women at Court were obliged to yield to the great movement of simplicity. They now wore only moderate *paniers*, trimmings for their dresses, and sleeves laid flat, forming but a single furbelow; they were even seen in a dress and waist of different color, which was an unheard-of innovation. From mothers, the mode spread to children; the latter were no longer dressed like dolls or miniatures of adults as the engravings of the century show until then; they adopted the rush hat, the coat and vest of the fishwife. The little girls, their hair powderless and held back by blue ribbon, now wore but a white sheath of muslin under a dress of pink taffeta. Here was a costume, informal as their age, leaving a liberty to their vivacity and activity, which scandalized the elders, who, as children, had been used to elaborate clothes.

Amid a fashion that rejected all the products of Lyons, *lampas* silks, superb druggets, Persian damasks and materials of figured silk, a taste for *batistes* and lawn suddenly appeared, a fashion brought to France by the youth of a queen. Woman gave herself up to white. Everywhere appeared those great aprons and those full *fichus* over the throat, which gave her the piquant appearance of

a lady's maid or of a turning-box girl, mocked by Madame de Luxembourg,¹ and celebrated in song by the Chevalier de Boufflers. The peasant simplicity that filled novels, imaginations and hearts was mixed with the simplicity of white. Rustic jewelry in steel, crosses and medallions hanging on a ribbon about the neck, took the place of the diamonds people dared no longer wear. Hats *à la laitière*, *à la bergère*, *à la vache*; *coiffures à l'ingénue*; *bonnets à la Jeannette*, ball-gowns *à la paysanne*, these costumes might have come out of the wedding-basket of the *Accordée de Village*. Amid the zeal of this return to Nature, amid this furious effort towards naïveté of costume and simplicity of externals and clothes, woman does not stop there. Before the Revolution, there was a moment when the entire mode of woman, everything that clothed and adorned her, was a copy of children's fashions.

¹The Maréchale de Luxembourg sent her granddaughter, the Duchesse de Lauzun, as a New Year's present, and, as a jest at her *penchant* for this fashion, an apron in wrapping canvas, garnished with a superb bit of lace.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOMINATION AND INTELLIGENCE OF W O M A N

AS IN THE case of the individual, each human age or century appears, in the eyes of posterity, to have been dominated by a distinctive character, by an intimate, superior, unique and rigorous law, derived from its customs, ordering its facts and from which, at a distance, history would seem to originate. At first glance, a study of the eighteenth century discloses this general, constant and essential character, this supreme law of a society which is its culmination, its physiognomy and its secret. The soul of this age, the center of this world, the point from which all things radiate, the summit from which all things descend, the image upon which all things are modeled, is Woman.

Woman was the governing principle, the directing reason and the commanding voice of the eighteenth century. She was the universal and fatal cause, the origin of events, the source of things. She presided over Time, like the Fortune of her history. Nothing escaped her; within her grasp she held the King and France, the will of the sovereign and the authority of public opinion—everything! She gave orders at Court, she was mistress in her home. She held the revolutions of alliances and political systems, peace and war, the literature, the arts and the fashions of the eighteenth century, as well as its destinies, in the folds of her gown; she bent them to her whim or to her passions. She could exalt and lay low. When she would create grandeurs or efface them, hers were the hand of favor and the thunders of disgrace. No catastrophe, no scandal, no lofty

deed but emanated from her during a century that she filled with prodigies, wonderment and adventure, throughout a history in which she set the surprises of a novel. From the elevation of Dubois to the Archbishopric of Cambrai down to the dismissal of Choiseul, there lurked, behind each rise and fall, a Fillon or a Du Barry, a woman, always a woman. From one end of the century to the other, government by woman was the only visible and appreciable government, possessing the consequences and mechanism, the reality and activity of power, without fail, apathy, or interval. There was the government of Madame de Prie; the government of Madame de Mailly; the government of Madame de Châteauroux; the government of Madame de Pompadour; the government of Madame du Barry. And later, when friendships succeeded mistresses, there was the government of Madame de Polignac.

The imagination of woman sat down at the Council table. Woman dictated domestic and foreign policies according to her tastes, her likes and her dislikes. She gave ministers her own instructions, she inspired ambassadors. She imposed her ideas and her desires upon diplomacy; the language of statesmanship assumed her tone, her tongue and the informality of her dainty graces to the point of adopting words of the boudoir and familiarities of gossip in the despatches of Bernis. Not only did she wield the interests of France, but she disposed of its blood; willing to leave absolutely nothing even to man's execution, which she had not planned and executed, marked with the imprint of her genius and signed, on the corner of a dressing-table, with the seal of her sex, she actually ordered the defeats of the French army with those plans of battle sent to headquarters, those plans on which the various positions are indicated by *mouches!*

Woman touched everything. She was everywhere. She was the light and also the shadow of this age, whose great historic mysteries always hold, concealed deep in its folds, a woman's passion, a love, a hatred, a conflict like the jeal-

ousy between Madame de Prie and Madame de Pléneuf which caused the downfall of Leblanc.

This domination by woman, which extended even to the King, spread everywhere about him. Kinship or love placed next to each minister a woman who laid hold of him and possessed him: the Cardinal de Tencin obeyed Madame de Tencin; Madame d'Estrades disposed of the Comte d'Argenson, the Duc de Choiseul was ruled by the Duchesse de Grammont (but for whom he might perhaps have accepted the peace la du Barry offered him); Madame de Langeac had the right to voice an opinion on the Letters of Warrant issued by Terray; Mademoiselle Renard on the promotions of General Officers brought to the King for his signature by Monsieur de Montbarrey; Mademoiselle Guimard on the ecclesiastical favors distributed by Jarente. From the ministers themselves, the domination of woman seeped down to the ministerial offices. It encompassed the entire government within the network of its myriad influences. It extended to every position and to every appointment disputed at Versailles. Through her energy of action, through the scope of her relations, through her skill, passion and stubbornness in soliciting, woman managed to fill the offices of state with creatures of her making. She succeeded in becoming almost sovereign mistress of the career of man, a sort of secret power dispensing advancement to each according to what favor he merited in her eyes. Here is the testimony of a contemporary witness, Montesquieu, on the universality and the power of her empire:

“There is no one holding an office at court, in Paris or in the provinces, without a woman through whose hands pass all the favors and at times all the injustices he can dispense. All these women entertain mutual relations; they form a kind of republic whose ever active members succor and serve one another reciprocally: they are a new state, as it were, within the state; and a man at Court, in Paris or in the provinces, who observes ministers, magistrates and prelates perform their duties, unless he knows the women

who govern them, is comparable to the man who sees a machine in play quite clearly but who knows nothing about its springs."

If woman ruled in the state, she was likewise mistress in the home. The power of her husband was subject to her as was the power of the King, as were the power and credit of the ministers. Her will decided and triumphed in domestic matters just as in public affairs. The family depended upon her; the home seemed to be her possession and her kingdom. The household obeyed her and received her orders. Formulas, hitherto unknown, invested her with a sort of property-right, from which her husband was excluded, over the people and things of the community. In the language of the age, everything was expressed, no longer in the husband's name but in his wife's. Service was carried on in the woman's name: people went to see Madame, they went to Madame's reception, they dined with Madame, Madame's dinner was served.—These were new expressions; their mere existence gives a sufficient idea of the decrease of the husband's authority and of the progress of his wife's.

To what shall we attribute this influence, this unparalleled domination, this sovereignty of almost divine right? Where is the key to it? How shall we explain it? Did the woman of the eighteenth century owe her power simply to the qualities peculiar to her sex, to the charm of her nature, to the habitual attraction of her person? Did she owe it altogether to her age, to human fashion, to that reign of pleasure which brought her power in a kiss and allowed her to rule everything since she commanded love? Doubtless woman drew a natural strength and a facility for authority from her perennial charms, as well as from the milieu and dispositions peculiar to her century. But her empire originated above all in her intelligence and in so singularly superior a type of woman that only her ambition and the span of her power equaled it. We have but to pause before the portraits of the age, before the paintings and pastels of Latour: intelligence dwells in these women's

heads and in their faces. The brow is meditative. The shadow of a reading or the caress of a thought flows over it, ever so lightly. The eye follows one with its glance as it might follow one with its thought. The mouth is delicate, the lips thin. In all these faces there is the determination and flash of a virile thought, a depth in their very *mutinerie*, an indefinable quality of meditation and penetration, that blending of the man and the stateswoman, whose features are to be found even in the face of an actress, of La Sylvia. As we study these faces, which grow serious as we look at them, a clear and decided character reveals itself under their grace. The discernment, the coolness, the intellectual energy, the power and resiliency of woman, which these portraits but half veil, emerge. Experience of life and knowledge of all its lessons come to light under their sportive air and their smile seems to hover on their lips like the subtlety of their reason and the menace of their wit.

Pass from these portraits and turn to history, the genius of the woman of the eighteenth century does not give the lie to this portrait. We find her adapting herself to the greatest rôles, we observe her broadening, growing, becoming masculine enough, or, at least, serious enough, through application, study and will power, to explain, to vindicate practically her most astonishing and scandalous usurpations. She rose to the government of the gravest interests and events; she undertook ministerial affairs; she interfered in the quarrels of the great bodies of state and in the troubles of the kingdom; she captured the responsibility and the will of the King; she climbed to the heights, and descended to the depths of the fearful and complicated art of government, undeterred by ennui, untroubled by giddiness, unforsaken of her strength. Woman brought her passions into politics, but she also brought to them unparalleled talents and quite unexpected ones. Like her countenance, her intellect displayed certain features of the statesman; we are astonished at times to see the King's

mistress playing the part of his Prime Minister with such dignity.

Success, it is true, did not crown the projects conceived or harbored by these women, who in governing the royal will at the same time governed the destiny of the monarchy; their plans, their innovations, the systems of their counselors, pursued by them with the steadfastness of obstinacy, their headstrong illusions ended in reverse, defeat and misfortune. But were the statesmen of the eighteenth century, who have left a name, any more fortunate than the stateswomen? Who succeeded? Who mastered circumstances? Who performed the work he willed? Who, among the most renowned, failed to leave behind him a heritage of ruin? Was it Choiseul? Or Necker? Or Mirabeau? Though she may have had Success, that force which condemns without judging, against her, the woman of the eighteenth century none the less displayed a remarkable aptitude, a singular talent, an astonishing capacity in the face of the greatest of affairs. She showed a greatness superior to the instincts of her sex; she undeniably possessed a quality which is the core of politics, and forms the moral loftiness of ambition: love of glory, and, if not respect, at any rate consideration of posterity. Above all, she introduced and illustrated in politics the two qualities which since her have been the twin forces of modern government, the secret and the art of ruling: the ability to charm men and to be eloquent.

What minister of the age pushed these gifts, seduction and eloquence, any further than the woman who personifies the stateswoman of the eighteenth century, Madame de Pompadour? A precious document shows us the extent of her political skill, the tone of her insinuating grace, the accent of her voice, of that voice, feminine and ministerial, which adapted itself to anything and rose to everything, which grew supple as a caress and harsh as a command, which answered, discussed and suddenly drowned the argument of her adversary with the inspired retort of an

orator. This document is the report in dialogue left by one of her enemies, the *Président de Meinières*, of the two interviews he had with her about Parliamentary affairs. The reader emerges from his reading with the admiration and amazement of *Monsieur de Meinières*, when he emerged from the antechamber where the favorite received him. To begin with, how impressive a bearing! how superior a scrutiny! and how her eyes hold those of her interlocutor! The politician, though he was used to parleying and, by habit, self-assured, fumbled for his words; his voice trembled. *Madame de Pompadour* knew no hesitancy: she said what she wished and no more. She allowed *Monsieur de Meinières* his overtures, encouraged him with a compliment, cut him short by opposing the King's will, and with what a sovereign expression she affirmed the royal authority! What skillful strategy she used in bargaining with this man who was Parliament, in sounding the heart of a father with a son to place, who might thereby be brought to compromise, or perhaps be persuaded to betray the trust of the body he represented and to write a private letter of submission to the King! As *Meinières* objected, immediately she rose to the occasion with a kindly word, picking up the term "honor"—used by the politician in argument against her, expatiating in superb expressions on the honor of doing the King's desires, his commands, and his will. Then, once started, carried away, abandoning herself to her ideas and ever finding the precise, nice word, she passed judgment on the conduct of Parliament and on the entire affair of the resignations, in a lively idiom, ranging from the sharpest irony to the happiest thrusts of cross-examination, to pressing questions, to exclamations torn from her soul. And, as the discussion waxed, *Madame de Pompadour* again introduced the King, evoked him, as it were, apart from his ministers, and lent him a will of his own; and it was the right and power of Louis XV that seemed to be speaking with her voice; it was, upon her lips, the anger of a King turning to face a rebellion, when she asked *Meinières*:

"Now I ask you, gentlemen of Parliament, who are you after all to resist the will of your master as you do?"

Then she exposed the position of Parliament from 1673 to 1715; she remembered the dates: the Order of Council of 1667, the *lit de justice* of 1673; she forgot nothing, she confused nothing; ever lucid, swift and lively, she crushed the politician, who emerged from the interview upset, disconcerted, ecstatic, haunted by the temptation and majesty of these words of a woman.

Before Madame de Pompadour, on a less brilliant stage, in a secondary order of events, behind courtiers and mistresses, the eighteenth century had already produced a woman of prodigious activity, of supple and hardy spirit, endowed with an imagination fertile in all manner of resources, uniting self-possession with vivacity, joining to the invention of expedients a grasp of a situation in its entirety, possessing at once a range of vision and a science of tactics, taking the measure of a man, shedding light upon facts, directing the favor of men and the favor of women from the shadow in which she worked and from the depths of the mines she had laid on all sides under the Court.

This was Madame de Tencin, that diminutive, frail, nervous, birdlike woman, that great minister of intrigue. At one moment she enveloped all Versailles and held the King on both sides, through caprice and through habit, through Richelieu and through Madame de Châteauroux. But what secret maneuvering, what strategy for which this busy woman's nights and days were barely sufficient, as she advanced down by what she called "every possible underground way." She was not, like a Madame de Pompadour, a sublime *comédienne*, striving to dazzle: she was devoured by ambition and indefatigably adroit, waging a guerilla warfare from under cover against everything that stood in the way of her brother's advancement. We may observe her marking the positions on the map of the court, seeing through appearances, and sounding the capacity of people. She weighed reputations and popularity, ministers swollen

and inflated "from a hundred feet below the places they occupy," the genius of men like Belle-Isle, the talent of Noailles, she brought everything back to its proper point, she advised, she warned, she planned the attack, she divined the defense with ever a cool sagacity, a pellucidity that suffered nothing to escape her and seized everything at its source. It was this woman, Madame de Tencin, who first appreciated all the energy a listless chief drains from a government and that spoke of the embarrassment the indifference of a prince puts in the wheels of an administration, that lethargy which spreads from a throne over an entire nation. It was she who prompted Madame de Châteauroux in her rôle and inspired her with the great idea of her reign, by suggesting she send her lover to the wars; it was she, through the agency of his mistress, who urged Louis XV toward the army, sending him to Flanders for Glory, that virile robe of a King of France. And, on that theme, what words she finds, and what practical judgment she shows, stripping illusion to lay truth bare. "Between us," she says of Louis XV, "it is not that he is capable of commanding a company of grenadiers; but his presence will do much good. The troops will accomplish their duty better and the generals will not dare fail in theirs so openly. Indeed, the idea appears to me to be an excellent one; it is the only means of continuing the war to less disadvantage. A King, whatever he be, is, for the soldiery and the people, what the Ark of the Covenant was for the Hebrews; his mere presence is a presage of success!"

There is a superior force in women that rules their affairs, governs their persons, gives them direction and a point of vantage. This force rules all their qualities and all their gifts: eloquence, intelligence, the ability to discern the pith of a question, the power of deduction, the invention of solutions, strategic skill, the science of march and counter-march on the moving terrain of the Court where the foot slips and can find no purchase. This truly superior moral faculty surpasses the mental faculties of even the most

gifted women. It consists in seeing clear into character and temperament, in discerning the ambitions, interests, passions and secrets of a soul; in a word, it is that innate intuition developed by custom, experience, necessity and the knowledge of man. For the one science utterly inherent in the woman of the eighteenth century, the highest aptitude of her subtle and delicate nature, the general instinct of her time, the almost universal instinct of her sex, the revelation of her hidden depth and worth are her knowledge of man. If it is particularly striking in many women, this knowledge is evident in almost all women. It may appear in letters, *mémoires* or miscellanea; in conversation, it soars on the wings of saying and epigram. In penetration of character, the women at Court yield nothing to stateswomen or women of affairs. These too, beneath appearances of futility, make man their study. In the subtle atmosphere of Versailles, their observation is in play everywhere about them, it never rests for a moment. They touch every phenomenon to the quick, they go deep under every surface confronting them. They question the people within their reach, they sound them, they discern their nature and they manage to forecast their feelings, intentions and mode of action in a given circumstance, to determine their hesitations, even to the play and beat of their hearts, in a circle of almost infallible probabilities. So Madame de Tencin left a portrait of Louis XV's royal weakness that no historian will ever equal.

But who was to speak the last word on the human weakness of the King? Who was to sound him to the uttermost depths, to indicate with admirable vivacity and precision the physiognomy of the man and the lover? Who indeed knew Louis XV better than Madame de Pompadour herself? It was the Maréchale de Mirepoix, called, by Madame Hausset, "the best head in the Council of Madame de Pompadour." The favorite being alarmed at rumors about Mademoiselle de Romain, Madame de Mirepoix thus reassured her friend: "I shall not tell you that he loves you

better than her and that if, by waving a magic wand, someone might transport her here, give her to sup this evening and know all her tastes thoroughly, there might perhaps not be cause for you to tremble. But princes are above all creatures of habit. The friendship the King bears you is the same as that he bears your apartment and surroundings; you have adapted yourself to his manners and stories; he is not embarrassed, he does not fear to bore you: how can you expect him to have the courage to uproot all this in one day?"

Outside Versailles itself, below the sphere of affairs and intrigue, in the home, in the family, in the household, this perspicacity was yet another feminine weapon and superiority. As a girl, woman had already employed it to judge the marriages that had been proposed to her, to discover, under the smiles of men who sought to please her, indications of violent temper, jealousy or injustice and menaces of tyranny. Once married, she retained no illusion about her husband; she saw through him to the very depths, she brought his thoughts to light, she judged him coldly, without passion as without pity. Often, she knew him better than he knew himself; and what a portrait she could sketch of him in a light and fugitive word! Her running analysis laid man completely bare. Each word touched something ridiculous, some soft fiber; each word showed what knowledge woman possessed of the tastes, the whims, the will, the accommodations and the chimeræ of this husband whom she took apart, sentiment by sentiment, and despoiled, piece by piece, leaving him without even the love she thought he bore her and did not. "Monsieur de Jully would be astonished indeed," said Madame de Jully to her sister-in-law, "if somebody were to tell him he does not care for me at all. It would be a cruel trick to play him, and me also, for he is the sort of man to be thoroughly put out, if he were robbed of his hobby."

Thus the woman of the eighteenth century possessed all the subtle qualities of sagacity that a contemporary calls

“leading-strings for men.” Her eye allowed nothing to escape it, in the recesses of self-esteem, the secrets of modesties, the lies of great reputations; in affectations of nobility, in what men conceal and simulate, in all their manners of frivolity and the slightest nuances of their moral countenances. Because they were continually occupied; because they were forced by the exigencies of their domination, by their place in society, by the interest of their sex and by their very inaction to carry on an incessant and almost unconscious work of judgment, comparison and analysis, the women of that age attained a sagacity that gave them the government of the world. It permitted them to strike straight at the heart of the passions, interests, and weaknesses of everyone. The women of the day acquired this prodigious tact so speedily and at such slight cost that it appeared almost as a natural sense in them. It might well be said that there was intuition in the experience of so many young women with this admirable contemporary gift of knowledge without study, of that knowledge which caused the *savantess* to know a great deal without being erudite, of that knowledge which made women of Society know everything without having learned anything. “Young intelligences divined far more than they learned,” said Sénac de Meilhan, in a profound epigram.

This genius, this habit of perception and penetration, this rapidity and sureness of vision instilled in woman a rationale of conduct, a quality frequently hidden by the outward aspect of the eighteenth century, yet easily discernible in all the expressions that escaped it. This quality was the personality and property of judgment brought back to the reality of life: the practical spirit. When we fathom the intelligence of the contemporary women, beyond her frivolity we find a firm, cold and arid field where all prejudice, all illusions and often all belief ceased. “Sound common sense” was the soul of this intelligence; no emotion warmed it, yet it illuminated everything about it. If a man sought counsel of it, the common sense of woman advised



Photo Giraudon

CARMONTELLE—Madame la Comtesse d'Egmont

him "to make friends with women rather than men. For, through women, you can do all you wish with men; and then men are either too distracted or too preoccupied with their personal interests not to neglect yours, whereas women think of them, if only through idleness. But beware of being anything more than a friend to those women you believe can be useful to you."

What lessons this positivism of appreciation and observation, this imperturbable and apparently natural skepticism taught; how subtle it was, what terrifying depths and lengths it went to! It was this wisdom, without the illusion of God, of society, of man, of faith in anything whatever, builded of every mistrust and every disenchantment, clear and absolute as the proof of a mathematical operation, having only one principle, the recognition of fact, that placed this maxim in the mouth of a young woman: "It is to your lover you must never say you disbelieve in God; but to your husband it does not matter at all, because with your lover you must leave yourself a way of exit. Religious scruples and devotion cut everything short." It was this wisdom that caused Piron's wife, to whom Collé was one day vaunting the probity of a certain man, to answer: "What! a man with your intelligence possessed of the prejudice of *meum* and *tuum*." Finally it gave woman that utter contempt for humanity and that incredulity of the honor of men which drew from the heart of Madame Geoffrin the words the Comte de Schomberg found sublime. Madame Geoffrin had made some very considerable offers to Rulhière if he would throw his manuscript on Russia into the fire. Rulhière grew indignant at the proposition: he spoke with eloquence and ardor, demonstrating the indignity and cowardice of the action she begged of him. Madame Goeffrin let him speak on; then, when he had finished: "How much more do you wish?" she asked.

Such was the moral worth of the woman of the eighteenth century. Let us now examine her intellectual, mental and

literary worth. A word, a book, her letters, the tastes of her sex will disclose it to us.

The first feature of this feminine intelligence in the comprehension and judgment of mental phenomena was a sense corresponding to her moral faculties: the critical sense. The counsel of a woman of the eighteenth century to a beginner who had read her a comedy reveals, better than any appreciation, in all its extent and in all its force, this sense, rare and apparently contrary to the temperament of woman. "At your age," this woman said to him after the reading, "you can write good verse but not a good comedy; for comedy is not only the work of talent, but also the fruit of experience. You have studied the theater, but, fortunately for you, you have not yet had leisure to study the world. You cannot paint portraits without models. Mingle in society. Where the ordinary man sees only faces, the man of talent distinguishes characters; but do not believe that you need live in the world of society in order to know it; look about you well, you will notice the vices and affectations of every estate. In Paris especially, the stupidities and extravagances of great men are quickly communicated to the lower ranks of society; the comic author has perhaps more to gain in observing them there, by the very fact that they show themselves there with less artifice and in a less diluted form. At every period, there are a particular character and a dominating color in manners that must be well grasped. Do you know the most signal trait of our present morals?"—"It seems to me to be gallantry," said the neophyte.—"No, it is vanity. Pay careful attention, you will see it mingling with everything, spoiling everything that is great, degrading passions and even going so far as to weaken vices." Where is there a loftier and truer appreciation of the comic theater to be found? Where is there an *Art Poétique* of comedy that is as brief and that indicates with such precision its prey, its objective, its colors, its materials, the great social idea that it must imitate the truth of nature and of contemporary humanity?

The qualities this woman indicated—experience in society, portrayal from models, study of the character discerned in a face—were, in this century, to make the literary genius of a woman. A masterpiece came from the pen of a woman. Nor did imagination inspire this masterpiece. It was observation that dictated it, observation that made the very heart speak in its pages, psychological observation which fathomed the depths of passion and analyzed it exhaustively. The woman who wrote this strange and charming book, Madame d'Épinay, did so under the spell and influence of a novel by Rousseau; she herself believed she was writing a novel; and it was her life she was exposing, her age she was laying bare. She had wished to approach the *Nouvelle Héloïse*; she equaled the *Confessions*.

There is a man in the *Confessions* of Rousseau; there is a society in the *Mémoires* of Madame d'Épinay. Marriage, the home, love, adultery, established institutions and scandals pass through its pages; they live again in all their development and scope. The atmosphere of the time surrounds each fact; the conversations are vocal; we can hear the din of Quinault's table. We eavesdrop on a scene of jealousy between Madame d'Épinay and Madame de Vercel, an admirable scene, superior in its natural quality and its veiled drama to all the dialogue of our theater. The figures of women who pass through the book step from its pages: Madame d'Arty, Madame d'Houdetot, Madame de Jully, Mademoiselle d'Ette, are living realities, their breath fans their words. Duclos is frankly alarming; Rousseau is so lifelike as to be terrifying; and the small fry, the Margencys, emerge, fathomed in one word, bared to the soul *en passant*. Here are unparalleled confessions, in which from the study of the world about her, of her husband, her lover, her friends, and her family, the writer returns unremittingly to the study of herself and to the confession of her weaknesses; she delves deep in her mind and deep in her heart; she betrays each heart-beat and exposes its cowardice. Knowledge of self and of others has

never, perhaps, been carried so far under the pen of man; it will never go further under a woman's.

But books in this age were but a chance manifestation of feminine genius. Woman's power of thought, her strength and penetration of judgment, the subtlety of her observation, her vivacity of idea and of comprehension, are incessantly and far otherwise expressed in the instantaneous sally of speech. The woman of the eighteenth century reveals herself above all in her conversation.

This science which defies all analysis, whose principles its contemporary commentators all elude—Swift no less than Moncrif, Moncrif no less than Morellet—this indefinable talent, undemonstrable and natural as grace itself, this social genius of France, the art of conversation, was the particular genius of the women of the period. They brought to it all their wit and charm, that desire of pleasing which is the essence of sociability and politeness, the prompt and delicate judgment which, at a glance, embraces and adapts every convention to the rank, age, opinions, and degree of self-esteem of each individual. They ban pedantry and dispute, personalities and preemptions. They make of it an exquisite pleasure given and partaken of by all. They give it the freedom, the zest, the fleeting movement of ideas winging from hand to hand. They endow it with a tone of inimitable perfection, neither ponderous nor frivolous, wise, gay without excess, polite without affectation, gallant without insipidity, witty without impropriety. Maxims and sallies, flattery and blandishments, quizzing and irony trip through this *causerie* which seems to blend wit and reason on the lips of woman. No dissertations; in a flight of words and a hurdle of questions, to skim a subject was to judge it. Conversation runs, rises, drops, glides and returns; rapidity gives it effect, precision lends it elegance. What feminine ease, what facility of speech, what abundant views, what fire, what verve go to make this swift-flowing conversation which sweeps every subject, veering from Versailles to Paris, from the pleasantry of the day to the

event of the moment, from the ridiculousness of a minister to the success of a play, from word of a marriage to the publication of a book, from the silhouette of a courtier to the portrait of a famous man, from society to government! For everything was within the span and competence of woman's conversation. Raise a grave subject or a serious question, and her delicious frivolity curtsies to her profound judgment; she amazes by this sudden revelation of unexpected knowledge and observation, as witness this startled confession of a philosopher: "A point of morals would not be better discussed in a company of philosophers than in that of a pretty woman of Paris."¹

How to recover now the conversation of the woman of the eighteenth century, a speech as dead now as her voice? In an echo, in that whispered confidence slipped in the ear of history by the spirit of the time: in letters.

The accent of her conversation, the echo of the eighteenth century lie there slumbering but alive. The letter, that relic of woman's grace, was her conversation to the life. It retained its expressions, its gossip, its carelessness and happy babble. The life of the age seemed to sparkle under the impatient hand of women, who rode roughshod over penmanship and spelling; as they seize and reflect it on the wing, wit overflows from their pen like a foaming supper-wine. It was a devil-may-care style, roving, meandering, losing itself, recovering itself, a style never listening yet ever replying, an improvisation without design, full of sound, color and caprice, confounding words, ideas and portraits, and leaving of this world's activity a thousand images like the fragments of a broken looking-glass. We append only one piece, a single excerpt, the beginning of a letter written by a woman, from Forges, the fashionable watering-place:

"Upon my word, how very right you are, my darling child, what a devil of a world and what a devil of a life and above all what devils of people, nothing is comparable to the people, truly names cannot name them, faces and styles are past depicting, a bore, a

¹ Julie, or la Nouvelle Héloïse.

cavagnole, compliments, nonsense, mirth and pleasures, box me their ears, bah, merits proper to the galleys and devotions all as stanch as wax in hell, but a Madame Danlezy she has grace yet she is nothing compared to Madame de la Grange, who the day before yesterday was only one and seventy, quite a big girl, and suffering from a spill of milk from her last confinement four years ago, but who yesterday blossomed into a goitre of half-an-ell, which came upon her in the night; the poor woman, lying in bed, cadaverous, woke up every bit as hammy as a beefy King of Sardinia, now there's one of those blows of fortune the waters here produce, oftener in musketeers than septuaginarian invalids, but there's no help for it, after the dew of heaven the poor woman must accept the fat of earth with resignation."

Breathless verve, sparkling chatter and dizzy wit were not the chief characteristics, however, of these women's letters. Even more than their conversation, their correspondence showed a faculty of depth and earnestness. The usual inspiration of the epistolary art was no longer a picture, description or painting as in the preceding century. Letters are now filled with observations and thought: analysis, judgment, ideas appear in them and assume the foremost place. The prattle of the world drifts through them, songs and anecdotes find an echo here, but in one corner, at the turn of the page, and, as it were, in postscript. What dominates these letters is moral speculation. The letter, like the woman writing it, shows what Madame de Créqui called "substantial flashes." Do but turn these light, tremulous leaves fallen from the hands of the most fashionable and seemingly irresponsible of women; and see her mind raising the most important and delicate questions. She is constantly questioning human nature in her own nature, rising to reflections on happiness; defining and indicating the tastes and passions which lead to it. She appreciates and weighs every social prejudice. Anent a new book, the "padded poverty" of which she exposes in a word, or on the theme of a present glory the "wires" of which she lays bare, she can formulate theories on moral good and evil, on human morality, on the origin and the legitimacy of passions. The portrait of a virtuous quack

leads her to set on paper her own ideal of virtue. In these epistles, society, government, customs, laws, public order, the entire glossary of the conversation of Madame de Boufflers unrolls before our eyes, while the writer seems hardly to give them a thought. She turns up these themes quite naturally, "on her rambles," unpremeditatedly; and drops them as naturally for a little monkey who has dropped something else in her hand.

Nothing proved too arduous or virile for the epistolary philosophy of woman. She communed with her personal reason, with her natural instinct, with her fear of oblivion and with her fear of death, which, with Young, she calls "the attribute of humankind." Playfully, laughingly, she wove you (to use her expression) the most profound metaphysics, a "*fourpenny*" philosophy. She raised psychological problems, reduced them to brief and substantial principles. Following Grotius, Puffendorff and Babeyrac, she treated natural law in a few lines; following Fénelon, she reformed the education of girls in a page or two. In these letters by women of the eighteenth century, where such subtlety is united to such perspicacity, such majesty to such delicacy, such strength of mind to such lack of moral discipline, we are astonished to find an ego pondering, judging, comparing and analyzing its reading, in its own phrase, *moralistically*, an ego accepting nothing from the opinions of others and rationalizing its sensations, its doubts, even its religion, in a word, everything it felt or believed. Thought reigned in these letters, it mastered the imagination, it scarcely allowed the heart to speak; it silenced sensation under formula, sentiment under definition and passion under axiom. So sharp does this spirit of philosophical dissertation and critical personality grow at the end of the century, that meditation and thought leave almost no room for tenderness or the cry of the soul in the letters of women.¹

¹Madame Necker avers that Madame Geoffrin suffered the self-imposed discipline of writing two letters daily and that Madame du Deffand made several rough copies of the most insignificant note of the morning.

Of the intellectual spirit of the woman of the eighteenth century a further proof is her love of letters. She lived in familiar communion, in a daily intimacy with letters; boasted always a literary basis, foundation and refuge. In this world preoccupied with thought and wit, in mansions and châteaux, each of which had its library, the woman of the age, who in the boredom of the convent had already acquired a great taste for reading, fortified herself in pen and print. She lived in an atmosphere of books, sustained by them; at every turn, her correspondence proves what earnest entertainment she sought in them, what nourishment she drew from the gravest of tomes, from philosophical works or historical narratives, after the day's libel or the current novelty. From this rose a literary culture, developed by the fashions of the salon, by the pastime of translation, by the popular amusements of certain tests of wit demanded of woman, which so often placed a pen in her hand. It might be the rhyme of a song, the invention of a short story, the definition of two synonyms, the composition of a proverb, all sorts of small games that excited her facility, that sharpened her inventiveness, that accustomed her and exercised her without fatigue in the crafts of authorship. Beside the professional authoresses, who tried their hand at every genre, from epic poetry to the strolling theater, an almost endless list might be drawn up of women of society, who turned author unassumingly, on occasion by example, almost by mistake. At one moment, everybody in the world of Madame d'Épinay was planning a novel. And where was the woman who did not yield to the exceedingly popular fashion of painting portraits, which made each woman depict her company, her friends and the women of her acquaintance, with touches of style worthy of Carmontelle?

Inclined to literature by all her tastes, touching it by every approach, the woman of the eighteenth century was the patron of letters. Through the attention she bestowed upon them, through the entertainment she sought in them,

through the protection she granted them, she attached them to her person and attracted them to her sex, she directed and governed them. Indeed does not every manuscript of the eighteenth century seem to have been penned at the feet of a woman, like that poem of the *Gardens*, scribbled on the patterns of a woman's embroidery and on the paper enveloping her tapestry-work? Woman was the Muse and counselor of the writer, the judge and the sovereign public of letters. Philosophic theories, often inspired by her,¹ must needs please her, they must court her with a smile, if they wished to enjoy vogue and reputation. Questions of science were prettified à la Fontenelle to fit to her fingers like a toy the secrets of heaven and the globe. Political economy itself assumed the wit of Morellet and the verve of Galiani to recommend itself to the mind of woman. Thought knew no manifestation, intelligence assumed no form, wit imagined no tone, boredom itself put on no disguise, that was not an homage to the all-powerful mistress, who governed the value of a work and the reputation of an author. She reigned in the theater: her whim ordained the destiny of first nights. She disposed of the victory or defeat of an author's vanity. She commanded, better than la Morlière, an entire auditorium. Her applause saved a tragedy from failure; one yawn from her killed a comedy that had been succeeding. It was she who brought plays to the stage, who produced them from the portfolio of a man of letters, touched them up, annotated them, forced them on reading committees, on the King himself; it was she who brought the *Philosophers* and *Figaro* on the boards. Without her patronage, without the recommendation of her enthusiasm, no one could get plays played, applauded or even read. Every mode of literature, every sort of writer, every pamphlet, every volume, even a masterpiece, required that she sign its passport and open it a way to publicity. The book she adopted sold; she herself

¹Madame Ferrand, it is said, gave Condillac his idea of the animated statue.

placed an edition in a few days, whether it were by Rousseau or by la Blatterie. The man that she sponsored was a success; he grew famous like La Harpe or Marmontel. Every favor a minister could bestow upon letters in the way of money, privilege, pensions, the support of newspapers and the championship of the *Mercure* passed through her hands and went exclusively to her clients. The fortune of men like Suard was purely her work. She spelled success, she was favor; and what a crowd stood under obligations to her! There was Robé, protected by the Duchesse d'Olonne; Roucher, protected by the Comtesse de Bussy; Rousseau, protected by the Maréchale de Luxembourg; Voltaire, protected by Madame de Richelieu, who obtained from the Keeper of the Seals that nothing be done against him without forewarning her; the Abbé Barthélemy, protected by Madame de Choiseul; Colardeau, protected by Madame de Vieuxville; d'Arnaud, protected by Madame de Tessé; Voisenon, protected by the Comtesse Turpin; Monsieur de Guibert, protected by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; Dorat, protected by Madame de Beauharnais; Florian, protected by Madame de Chartres and by Madame de Lamballe; there were others whom women championed, extolled, upheld, supported with a pension from their own purses and pushed on their way towards the Academy. For the Academy, in this age, withstood woman no better than the public or public opinion. Throughout the entire century, was it not woman who drew up its lists of candidates? She filled it with her friends, she opened and closed it. She held the key to it, she possessed its votes. There were seats in the Academy to which she seemed to hold title and in which she placed a man in order to write her name there. She granted immortality to living authors or deprived them of it; she dispensed contemporary glory; she punished by a sort of unpopularity even the celebrity of a talent that did not suit her. Thomas, who had not the women's party in his favor, remained obscure despite his reputation. And why, even to-day, is the name of Diderot still rated so far

below those of Voltaire and Rousseau? Because he was not launched in the great swim of recognized glories, acclaimed by the woman of the eighteenth century, consecrated and sanctified by her enthusiasm.

Nor did she represent favor and fortune in letters alone; she incarnated fashion and success in the arts. Those graces of an age, the arts, depended upon her. She attuned their harmony and tone; she encouraged them and smiled upon them. She created their ideal by her taste and their vogue by her approbation. Accordingly, from Watteau to Greuze, not a great name arose, no talent or genius won recognition unless it had the merit of pleasing woman, unless it had caressed, touched or pleased her eye and paid court to her sex.

Woman loved art, she appreciated and practiced it as she did letters, toying with it as a pastime and a natural aptitude. This was the age of those agreeable amateur talents that placed a pencil or even an etching-needle in the hands of lovely woman. This was the age of drawings improvised on a salon table, of aquatints, piquant and naïve, scratched on the copper, you'd fancy, with a pin plucked from a ribbon. Madame Doublet drew the profile of her friend Falconnet. The Marquise de la Fare painted the portrait of la Harpe. Nor was the finished drawing always left to Caylus or Mariette to engrave. On a plate varnished by some painter who frequented the house, woman discovered copper, attempted an etching and took pleasure in distributing it among those of her intimate company. After Madame de Pompadour, who left a specimen of her work, how many women, from duchess to *bourgeoise*, signed a famous or obscure name in the corner of a little plate destined to be the joy of the collector, when he finds it on the *quais* in turning the pages of some old portfolio where it slumbers!

As this protection of writers, this presidency of letters, this government of men and the works of their minds, embraced both men and art, no manifestation of the age

remained without the domination of woman. Thence women drew a sort of power latent in the air and brooding over the period. From 1700 to 1789, woman was not only the magnificent spring that set all in motion; she seemed a power of superior order, the sovereign of all thinking France. She was the principle set at the summit of society, towards which all eyes are raised and all hands are stretched. She was the idol before which men knelt and the form men adored. Everything in the way of illusions, aspiration, transport, submission and faith a religion attracts to it, turned unconsciously towards woman. Woman did what faith does, she filled the hearts and minds of men, and, while Louis XV and Voltaire reigned, she was the proxy of heaven in a godless age. Everything crowded to her worship and worked towards her exaltation; all the hands of idolatry raised her up from earth. Not a writer but sang her praises, not a pen but gave her wings to fly; even in the depths of provincial towns she had poets vowed to her cult, poets who belonged to her; and from the incense thrown under her feet by the Dorats and Gentil-Bernards, there arose that cloud of apotheosis, crossed by flights of doves and the fall of roses, which was her throne and her altar. Prose, verse, brush, scissors and lyre crowned her enchantment with a sort of divinity: and woman reached a point where for the eighteenth century she was not only the god of happiness, pleasure and love, but the poetic being, the essential sacred being, the end of all moral elevation, the human ideal incarnate in one sex of humanity.

CHAPTER X

THE SOUL OF WOMAN

ONCE THE EIGHTEENTH century through its conventions, its examples, its good taste, the good tone of society and the lessons of life, has completely renewed the education and almost the nature of woman; once these forces have stripped her of all naturalness, timidity and simplicity, she becomes that type of social manners: *la caïllette*.

The sketch that Duclos traced of her in a few impromptu strokes of the pen, in the *Confessions of the Comte de . . .*, is but a light and superficial outline. He has barely skimmed her physiognomy; it is only the light, flighty and empty woman of all time who emerges under his lively but banal touch. Here, he says in effect, is a species whose heart and mind are cold and sterile; forever busied with petty objects; subordinating everything to some minute detail which strikes her fancy; eager to appear educated; living in mischief as in her element; making it her profession to pass judgment on clothes and fashions; interrupting the conversation to point out that the taffetas of the year are frightful; taking a lover like a smart dress, because it is the fashion; a nuisance in business, a bore in pleasure. And Duclos limits himself to that portrait.

La caïllette is, in the eighteenth century, a more particular and significant figure. She is not only the supreme expression of woman, of her generic senses, her average moods; in the nerves, brain, fevers and fickleness of her sex, she represents her age and individualizes it intrinsically and delicately. She is above all the product, the result,

the most obvious example, the most highly finished picture of the pursuit of elegance and intellectual fads in France. And we can perhaps make no further progress in familiar acquaintance with this century of woman, we can touch it no nearer, than through this person, who exemplifies both virtually an over-development of woman and the extravagance of her age.

What might be called the outward soul of the eighteenth century,—its mobility, its vivacity, all the animation of its light graces, all the murmurs of its æry nothings,—is the very soul of the *caillette*. The *caillette* embodies the disdain of the world about her for the seriousness of life; the smile with which it covers everything; its fear of serious matters and weighty duties; its mania of ever fluttering over its words, deeds and thoughts. Her ideas are limited, she jumps at conclusions; in her light pastimes and her frivolity of head and heart, she displays the secret, the habits and the love of inconsistency and of vapid levity. She reflects and parades the new philosophy of her sex, its horror for every common, gross, *bourgeois*, gothic thought, its detachment from every prejudice in which the preceding century had enfolded happiness, duty and the consideration of woman. Her ideal in everything, in every field, is composed of the petty, the brief and the pleasant; her ideal is the *piquant*, something cut in size and length on the model of a fashionable pamphlet. Nothing but a current amusement to be picked up, fingered and laid aside appeals to her imagination. As this artificial creature appears to us, she might well be the model doll of the tastes of that extreme civilization. Her entire person is a prattling, mincing, refined elegance of manners; it breathes an exquisite corruption of sentiment and expression. By dint of continual exertion, she succeeds in personifying in herself “that quintessence of daintiness and charm” which, at that time, represents the perfection of elegance in people and the absolute of beauty in things. She brings forth from herself, as from out of a coarse envelope, a new social being, to

whom a more subtle sensibility reveals a whole order of impressions, of pleasures and of sufferings unknown to preceding generations, indeed to all humanity before 1700. She becomes the woman with intoxicated nerves, made feverish by the world, by the paradoxes of its supper-tables, by its scintillating conversation, by the noise of its days and nights, carried headlong in its whirlwind. At the end of it, she finds that mad and coquettish intoxication of eighteenth century graces: *le papillotage*—a word discovered by the age to paint what is most precious in its amiability and most subtle in its feminine genius.

Under this fever of manners, under all these dissipations of imagination and of life, there remains something unappeased, unsatiated and empty in the heart of the woman of the eighteenth century. Her vivacity, her affectation, her enthusiasm for fantasy seem to be a worry; and the impatience of a disease appears in this continual search for gayety, in this frenzied appetite for pleasure. But she struggles, she searches around her for a sort of deliverance in vain; she gains no end by plunging, by drowning herself in what that age calls "an ocean of worlds," by taking the first step towards distractions and new faces, towards those passing *liaisons* with chance friends for which the century invents the word *connaissances*. The ever-changing spectacle of dinners, suppers, entertainments, pleasure trips, tables ever filled, salons ever amurmur; of a continuous procession of people; of the variety of the news, of faces, of masks, of toilettes and of eccentricity, cannot entirely absorb woman with its tumult. Let her burn her nights out by candlelight, let her summon more activity about her increasingly as she grows older, she always finishes by falling back upon herself. She finds herself in seeking to escape herself, and under her breath, she confesses to herself the suffering that gnaws her. She recognizes *ennui* in her, the secret and irremediable evil this century bears in itself and drags about with it everywhere, smiling.

We must take care indeed. We must not allow ourselves to be duped by the appearances of this world, by the reputation it has made for itself through its outward features. We must pierce beyond what it shows us; we must touch what it betrays. What do we find as the motivating force of its struggles, as excuse for its scandals, as expiation of its faults? *Ennui*. *Ennui* is the heart of the age, the great mark and the great secret of that society. In another volume, we have sought to paint, in its general characteristics and in the ensemble of its influences, that principle of death which penetrates everywhere in the reign of Louis XV and which brings to the soul of France such weaknesses, such disgust, so strange a disenchantment of courage and initiative. From the top rung of the social ladder to the bottom, we have shown how the evil grew from order to order, in the lower walks bursting forth brutally in the cynicism of suicide; in the upper, incarnating itself in a master who promenades the *ennui* of a people in the *ennui* of a King from the little apartments to the Parc aux Cerfs.

But this sorrow—the sorrow of an intelligent century, punished through its very intelligence by melancholy; this providential punishment of a society living only through amusement, insatiable save through its intelligence, cowardly before duty and no longer religious; the melancholy of this humanity no longer possessing any virtues save those of sociability; the emptiness of this world whose interests and conscience suffocate in the air of *salons*; this torture, subtle and in keeping with eighteenth century delicacy, were to find their martyr in woman.

Through the exigencies of her instincts, through the subtlety of her moral sensibilities, through the volatility of her entire being, woman was to suffer from this disease of the century more than man. When Walpole called the woman of the eighteenth century “a *débauchée* of wit,” he defined and explained her. “I have a stupid admiration for all that is witty,” one woman confesses in the name of all. Woman is all mind, and it is because she is all mind

that she feels within her, as it were, a desert. She knows no sentiment, no superior force upholding her, no spring of tenderness to slake her thirst; nothing save an activity of mind, a sort of libertinage of thought which plunges her back into the disenchantment of life at every moment. Her heart floats without anchor to which it may moor. At the same time her faculties lack a link to unite them and a superior purpose to govern them; they lack faith, devotion, one of those great currents that make woman triumph over the weaknesses of her moral will. Hence that aridity she cannot remedy which leaves her disconsolate. Hence that singular prostration, that feeling of weariness deadening her conscience, that nervousness in pleasure, that flavor of ashes in everything she tastes. She makes use of everything to rouse herself, to awaken, to feel alive, to nourish or at least to impel her thought. She throws herself into reading, she devours history, novels, the *contes* of the day, but *ennui* closes the book between her fingers. She has scarcely the courage to take refuge in the *Essais* of Montaigne, to lull her soul in this breviary without consolation, which the last feminine spirit of the eighteenth century, Madame d'Albany, called "the *patrie* of her soul and her mind." She delivers herself to society, she wrenches herself violently, furiously from solitude; she adopts the dominant passion of the Duchesse du Maine, "the passion of the crowd"; but disgust with herself cannot save her from the disgust of others. The people about her soon become no more than a sort of spectacle; society seems to her a traffic of *ennui* given and taken; and she recognizes that *ennui* comes from all sides, from solitude as from the crowd, that other solitude, "the most absolute and weightiest of all," as a great lady of the day avowed in the flush of the finest salon in France.¹

Correspondences, *mémoires*, confessions, all the documents, all the familiar revelations of the time betray and

¹ Correspondance inédite de Madame du Deffand. Michel Lévy, 1859, Vol. I.

affirm that inner discomfort of women. There is no effusion, no letter where the complaint of *ennui* fails to return as a refrain, as a moan. It is one continual lament on this state of indifference and passivity, on this torpid lack of all curiosity and vital energy depriving the mind even of desire, of liberty and activity, leaving it no patience other than sloth and cowardice. *Ennui*, for the women of that age, is the chief evil, it is what they themselves call the "enemy." We need but listen when they mention and acknowledge it: their language, otherwise so exact, so little given to declamation, thereupon adopts enormous expressions to describe the immensity of their discouragement. *Le néant* (nothingness)—such is the word they find, without judging it too strong, to depict that death-slumber to which they succumb: "I have fallen into *le néant*. I have fallen back into *le néant*." Such is the phrase that these women of taste and balance wrote currently, naturally, finding it at their pen's end whenever they wish to speak of their *ennui*, so much does their suffering appear to them impossible to express better than by comparison with the oblivion that follows death. The most noble and courted of women utter cries of disgust like those of a dying man as he turns his head to the wall: "The living all bore me! . . . Life bores me!" Some of them go so far as to envy trees, because they cannot feel *ennui*.¹ And the great letter-writer of the day, Madame du Deffand, will be the great painter of *ennui*. This *ennui* of heart and soul reacted on the body of woman. It gave her a suffering, a weakness, a languor, a sort of physical sadness and atony, the muffled discomfort that the age vaguely christened "vapors." "The vapors are *ennui*" said Madame d'Épinay. The eighteenth century saw nothing but affectation in this ailment. Weary of seeing women without energy, without will-power, stretched out on a chaise longue, barely strong enough to tie knots, complaining so inertly of being "exhausted,"

¹Letter of the Marquise du Deffand to Horace Walpole. Paris, 1812, passim.

the age believed, or wished to believe, that there was no motive in an illness which had become in good taste and modish. By ridicule, epigram and song, it sought to stifle these vapors, which it mistook for the megrims, an imaginary evil, an affectation, but which, for all their farcical lengths, concealed the great suffering of centuries that are civilized, that malady of the nervous system, secret hypochondria, hysteria, terrible and mysterious. When, at the close of the century, the vapors become real nervous seizures and women are forced to have their bedrooms padded against periodic attack, when the disease bursts forth with such surprising symptoms as those of the *Princesse de Lamballe*,¹ the public continues to poke fun at such periodical faints as at a craze.

Here it is necessary to search for causes, peculiar to the age and the woman of that day, the causes that pre-disposed her from early childhood to this valetudinary state, this strange disease of *ennui* which had passed from the imaginative forces to the vital, and before which medicine was to lose itself in groping and perplexity. From the time a woman put off her swaddling clothes, she was closed in a sort of cuirass; when she was quite small, an artificial figure was designed and fashioned for her in the shape of a *corps à baleine* (whalebone corset). Short of this, in the opinion of the times, a little girl could develop into nothing save a shapeless being, a "rustic." To this initial compression of the organs, to the use of this whalebone corset, hindering respiration and digestion, Bonnaud generally attributes the

¹ Madame de Lamballe deserves mention among the most seriously stricken *vaporeuses*. She often lay in a faint for two hours; the odor of a bouquet of violets made her ill; the sight of a lobster or crawfish, even in a painting, caused her a nervous fit. Madame de Genlis, resentful against Court as she is, sees nothing more in such scenes than a pretty comedy. Madame de Genlis is unfortunately wrong. Madame de Lamballe's nervous system was upset not by the causes Dr. Saiffert indicated but by the deep sorrows her husband occasioned her. The disorder, degenerating into profound melancholia and convulsive vapors, is so real that research for a remedy was conducted among doctors, empiricians and charlatans, from Pittara (who made cures with poultices applied to the navel) down to Mesmer, Deslon and their crew.

vapors in his book on the *Degradation of the Human Species by the Use of Corps à Baleine*.¹

Next came the use of white and rouge, formerly worn only after marriage, but to be seen nowadays on the cheeks of young girls, and abused more excessively in proportion as woman grows older—the unhealthy use of preparations themselves still more unhealthy. The white was not always white of Candia, made of eggshells: it was often composed of magisteries of bismuth, of Jupiter, of Saturn, of white lead; the rouge was not merely drawn from animal or vegetable matters like cochineal, red sandalwood, or wood of Pernambuco, but also from minerals like cinnabar, minium, minerals of lead, sulphur and mercury.

And what evils arise from this white and especially this rouge! The most inoffensive of the latter, namely carmine, vegetable rouge or the rouge of Portugal, renowned as the most beautiful and the brightest, was abandoned by women because of the headaches and the megrims it caused them! Pimples, inflammations on face or gums were the lightest discomforts this coloring and plastering brought about. White and red not only spoiled the teeth, they so impaired the eyes as to threaten the eyesight, they attacked the entire nervous system and caused disorders in the entire body which abated only when use of them was abandoned.² To these we may add further disorders produced by the excessive use of heady perfumes, of amber; by a cookery unknown to the France of Louis XIV, a cuisine composed entirely of juices, of *cullis*, of spices, or gravies, a sublimate

¹The entire century rose up against this fashion of *corps* that women refused to abandon at any price. It was truly a Crusade, from the aspersions in the *Modern Aretino* to the observations of the anatomist Winslow, from the objurgations of old Metra to the complaints of the Chevalier de Jaucourt in the Encyclopedia. During the entire century the *corps à baleine* was attacked; it was held responsible for the death of a great number of children, for example the Duchesse de Mazarin. The most fashionable corsets were the *corps à la grecque*, firstly because of their name, next because of their cheapness. But they were very dangerous because the whalebones rose just under the throat and might thus wound it.

²Letter on various eye diseases caused by the use of red and white, by Gendron. Paris, 1760.

of succulence giving to the play of the organs a factitious effervescence, burning instead of nourishing, and placing in the chyle, in the blood, in the lymph, an element of corrosion. To heighten this cuisine still further, liqueurs of Lorraine, hitherto unknown, were introduced at dessert. Everything was contrary to the laws of feminine hygiene; the order and hour of meals, the suppers prolonged far into the night, which burden a disordered stomach, and occasion in the letters of the women of the age so many complaints of indigestion. Furthermore, as a nervous irritant, there were coffee, chocolate and tea, which medical authorities of the day considered among the greatest stimulants.

What other causes of vapors? The doctors found one in medicine, in the medication of their age, the abuse of bleeding and purging for the slightest indisposition which might be treated by diet and water. They noted another very singular one: the reading of novels. For some of them, here lay the origin and secret of woman's afflictions. They found further reason for her discomfort and the disturbance of her health in the mania for romantic reading that filled the century and seized children from infancy. And after depicting the state in which novels put woman (a life suspended in attention, long hours, whole nights consumed in a passion of reading, so much mental work without physical exercise, so many emotions, so many sensations racing through her, such excitement rising to her brain from the magic pages whose perfume she breathed, from those sheets so enrapturing, they concluded, by their spokesman, the author of the *Affections vaporeuses*, that any little girl who, at the age of ten, read instead of playing, must inevitably become a woman with the vapors.

Basically, all these reasons for the vapors of the eighteenth century were but secondary. There was one which dominated them all: society, society and its life. Her enervation came from her night-life, from a life which won the name of *lamps* for women, from a society which

lived by night and went to bed by day.¹ It derived from the resultant fever, from that torment of the nights of the century, insomnia. Already under the Regency, women had tossed about on their beds until seven in the morning; and now we hear Madame du Deffand and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse complaining, in utter despair of their inability to sleep.

Yet what havoc did the material life of society work compared with her moral life? An incessant play of every faculty, ambition, jealousy, rivalry, campaigns, the overstimulation of her mind and charms, her cultivation of talents, disappointment, mortification, bleeding vanities, burning passions—were not these fevers potent enough to undermine and upset the delicate organism of woman?

Before this malady, growing daily apace, the science of medicine at first remained embarrassed and hesitant. A few doctors, attributing it to imagination alone, cured the vapors without treating them. It was by this system that the celebrated Sylva, without use of medicaments, exorcised the vaporous ladies of Bordeaux by terrifying their coquetry. His cure consisted in telling them that what they called the vapors was really epilepsy. Soon, however, forced to recognize real suffering and a malady in the reigning affection, and to treat the vapors with medicaments, physicians tried tonics, stimulants, antispasmodics, ether, musk, asafoetida, molasses water, water of the Queen of Hungary, Hoffman's drops, Stahl's and Geoffroy's pills. This energetic and comforting treatment succeeded rather poorly, when there appeared a man destined for several years to enjoy a vogue almost equal to that of the malady he cared for. Nothing failed him, neither persecution nor the enthusiasm of his patients nor the practice of the most qualified women, nor the confidence of Madame du Deffand who asked him to restore her sleep. This physician was the famous Pomme. Comparing nerves in their healthy

¹ Duclos in the *Confessions of the Count of . . .* says of a woman: "There was nothing she did not prefer to the sorrow of going to bed."

state to a damp and soft parchment, he attributed the vapors to a drying-up, a dog-earing of the nervous system. According to his system, the entire science of medicine consisted in reviving its natural humidity in this tissue: he believed he could succeed in doing so by prescribing diluents, humectants, *eau de veau*, *eau de poulet*, whey and especially warm baths, lasting five, six and even eight hours. In the space of four months, one of his patients, Madame de Cluny, spent twelve hundred hours in the water! He cured people, above all he succeeded! But two of the great ladies whom he treated, the Marquise de Bezons and the Comtesse de Belzunce, died towards the end of 1770. Their death caused a great stir. He was pursued by his colleagues' jealousy and chicane; they went so far as to bribe servants to pour *siróp de Rabel* on the *purées* of cucumber and chicory prescribed for his patients. His vogue began to wane; he left Paris and repaired to Arles, his native town. His enemies spread the rumor that he had gone abroad or was dead. Profiting by a return of fashion, they compared his treatment to that of Printemps, a soldier of the French guard who had made a fortune, a few years previous, by prescribing to ladies with vapors a decoction of hay. But Printemps had not retired like Pomme; he had collapsed. He had earned enough with his hay-broth to feed dry hay to a pair of horses which drove his coach but on the high-road to fortune he was halted by a complaint lodged by the Faculty with Monsieur le Maréchal de Biron, which dropped him back in the gutter. Meanwhile Pomme lived on in spite of his enemies; he still had devotees in Paris who journeyed down to consult him. Stedfast and enthusiastic patients remained, for instance the Comtesse de Boufflers who almost immediately after the death of the Prince de Conti left Paris and established herself in Arles, where she spent the whole winter within reach of the attentions of Monsieur Pomme. It was doubtless she who recalled him to his great scene of operations, who reëstablished him in the

capital and brought back his clientèle. Through her influence, he became Physician Consultant to the King, and in 1782 a new edition of his *Treatise on the Vaporious Affections* appeared, published by order of the government and printed on the Royal Presses.

Next to Pomme, there arose a physician whose popularity was destined to be more durable and whose name has come down to us: Tronchin! Pretty women flock to question this oracle in Geneva, all France hastens to his ante-chambers in Paris. Imagine the Rousseau of medicine, Tronchin is that. The revolution accomplished in the heart of woman by the *Nouvelle Héloïse* was accomplished in her habits and in her daily life by Tronchin's prescriptions. He roused woman out of her idleness and her languor, almost out of her constitution. He forced her to movement and to an invigorating fatigue. He imposed heavy tasks upon her; he made her scrub salons, dig a garden, walk in earnest, run, *fag* herself: his doctrine introduced this word into the speech of women. He restored her limbs to exercise, her body to liberty, with new dresses, bearing his name, soon worn all over Paris by strollers leaning on long canes, *tronchinant*¹ as the age calls it. To walk became a fashion; which explains why the Maréchale de Luxembourg, challenged to name the charm she found in La Harpe's company, answered in his defence and her own: "He offers his arm so nicely!"

To busy woman physically; to distract her from herself by bodily activity and fatigue; to stir her blood and her humors; to refresh her head by exercise and open air were the means Tronchin made use of to wage war on the melancholy and *ennui* of woman, to draw her out of moral stagnation, to restore its equilibrium to her nervous organism. Nothing was added to this system by the phy-

¹In these ailments, considered basically moral maladies by physicians, Roussel (*Physical and Moral System of Woman*) arose against walking, the remedy par excellence of Tronchin, attacking the intemperance of ideas caused in woman by strolling, ideas which, while delighting them, wearied the springs of their minds.

sicians in vogue who followed him: by Lorry, so gouty that his patients came to consult him in his coach; by Berthes, a typically handsome ladies' physician, who bled them with a cord with golden tassels and who received a pension of two thousand pounds from the Duc d'Orléans for having saved the life of Madame de Montesson.

Meanwhile, even if she sought a balm for her physical ills of medicine and of charlatans, woman also sought in herself a remedy for her moral discomfort. Returning to the source of all her sufferings, to the principle of her disease, what did she find? Inactivity of ideas amid excitement, dispersion of self, that scattering of the mind which makes for dissipation. Whence came that flavor of the *néant* which everything, even pleasure itself, took on at her touch? From the nothingness within herself, from the emptiness she concealed under a nervous frivolity; from the cold activity that distributed her mind in every direction, without interesting it particularly in anything, giving it movement without elasticity. The cardinal evil, the poison in her life, the wretchedness of her condition were, in a word, a lack of what she herself called "an object."

Thus an object in life became her pursuit throughout the entire century. Thus passionately, in a frenzy of infatuation, heedless of eccentricity or ridicule, she went seeking the serious, solid mental foundation, the intellectual interests, the basis and end and weight she lacked, not in the pastimes of the mind within her reach, but in the extremes opposed to the talents and aptitudes of her sex, in studies that attracted her apparently because of their seriousness, their immensity, their depth, indeed by virtue of their horror, by virtue of all that absorbs and possesses the intellect of man.

Novels disappeared from the dressing-tables of women; only treatises of physics and chemistry appeared on their *chiffonniers*. The greatest ladies and the youngest took up the most abstract of subjects, rivaling Madame de Chaulnes

who embarrassed the academicians and savants who came to her husband's house. By 1750, Maupertuis was already the "wheeze" of women; it was already the thing for the *petites-mâîtresses* to rave over the séances of the Abbé Nollet, to watch him draw fire—audible fire—from the chin of a tall lackey by scratching it. In the salons at the end of the century, groups were formed of twenty or twenty-five people for courses in Physics, in Chemistry applied to the Arts, in Natural History, in Myology. Not to attend the lectures of Monsieur Sigault de la Fond or of Monsieur Mittouard invited a blush; did not the names of Madame d'Harville, of Madame de Jumilhac, of Madame de Chestenet, of Madame de Mallette, of Madame d'Arcambal, of Madame de Meulan figure among those who flocked to them? ¹ A woman no longer had herself painted on a cloud of Olympus but in a laboratory. When Rouelle, the brother of the famous Rouelle, conducted experiments on the fusion and volatilization of diamonds, he numbered among his spectators the Marquise de Nesle, the Comtesse de Brancas, the Marquise de Pons, the Comtesse de Polignac and Madame Dupin, whose curious and attentive eyes followed the diamond flashing under the fire of the muffle-furnace, twinkling for one last time and exuding light. A newspaper arose to fill the need of the times and cater to the tastes of woman. Mingling science and ornamental arts, side by side with Poetry it discussed items of philanthropy, varieties and the play; it furnished descriptions of machines, remarks on Astronomy, letters on Physics, excerpts on Chemistry, research in Botany and Physiology, Mathematics, Domestic Economy, Rural Economy, Agriculture, Navigation, Naval Architecture, History, Legislation and the Proceedings of the Academy. This was the *Journal Polytypique*. Men such as Pilastre du Rozier and La Blancherie exploited the same idea and

¹The Historico-Physical Almanach, or the Physiosophy of Ladies, out of forty-eight laboratories of Natural History in Paris, cites seven belonging to women, among whom are Mademoiselle Clairon and Mademoiselle Ibus.

the same craze. Paying academies and *museums* arose, their success assured by a public of women who applauded everything offered to their inspection, even to the tomes of G ebelin on the bull Apis! Museums and lyceums filled Paris with amiable knowledge and attractive erudition. And what prettier picture than all those pretty heads turned towards the doctor enthroned in his curulian chair, at the end of a long table laden with crystallizations, globes, insects and minerals? The burr of his voice, the nicety of his diction, are elocutionary charms for the circle of women forming the first row of the audience, their cheeks innocent of rouge and wan no doubt with long watching, their heads resting negligently on three compass-like fingers, rapt in attention or with grave eye and hand applying the points of the discourse to the objects spread out on the table before them.

But lyceums were too little. In 1786 the Royal College, that school of all the arts and sciences, frequented heretofore only by serious students, the Royal College itself found its doors stormed by women, vanquishing the vigorous opposition of the Abb e Garnier, by the aid and intrigues of their friend Lalande. Alas for the delicate maxim of Madame de Lambert: "On the subject of science, woman must maintain a modesty as delicate as towards vice"! No science repels her; the most virile sciences seem to exercise a temptation and a fascination. The passion of Medicine is almost universal in society; the craze for Surgery is frequent. Many women learn how to wield the lancet, even the scalpel. Others are jealous of the granddaughter of Madame Doublet, the Comtesse de Voisenon. From the physicians received at her grandmother's, she had learned something of the art of healing, and she practiced her cures, at her country seat, among her friends, on anyone she could lay hands on; until at last certain jokers, by inserting a notice in the *Journal des Savants*, made her believe she was elected President of the College of Medicine. The Marquise de Voyer was keenly

interested in lessons of Anatomy and took pleasure in following the course of the chyle in the viscera. For, at this period, Anatomy is among the chief feminine fads. Certain women of fashion even dream of having, in a corner of their gardens, a little boudoir containing those *delights* of Mademoiselle Bihéron, the great artist in anatomic subjects, made of wax and of *chiffons*, a glass case filled with corpses! A young miss of eighteen, in fact, the Comtesse de Coigny, was so passionately fond of this horrible study, that she would never travel without taking in the seat of her coach a corpse to dissect, as one takes a book to read.

The dream of the woman of the eighteenth century was universal knowledge, and a compendium of talents, inspired by an example of genius, the alert and light genius of Voltaire, who seemed to embrace whatever he touched and who, by way of relief from sifting a world of passions, took to dabbling in that of science for sport. What was it to produce? Merely a dainty monstrosity, a woman who knows how to blood-let and to pluck a harp-string, to teach geography and to play-aet, to plot a novel and to draw a flower, to herborise, to preach and to rime, the perfect type of what that age called *une virtuose*: Madame de Genlis.

Of these two great currents of the mode, one drew woman towards the refined coquetries of caprice, of affectation and frivolity, of *préciosité*, of lightness and of mobility. It carried her outside real life, almost out of the earth. The other current bore her, in the wake of Madame du Châtelet, towards the *bel esprit* of the sciences, to that sphere of chemical and physical entertainment where Newton is named Algarotti, in brief, towards the vanity and superficiality of all knowledge.

There was one woman in the eighteenth century who resisted these two opposite movements in the minds of women. But, while she waged war on both foibles, this woman could not conquer the latter: the vogue of the lyceums was to survive her, to spread and grow, to withstand even the

Revolution, and to reappear under the Directoire in all the brilliance of its extravagance.

Not so, however, with the exaggeration, and, if we may say so, the hectic cult of grace; she scanned and discredited it almost completely. From the heights of her influential *salon*, this woman—a *bourgeoise*—punctured this fashionable inflation with a pin-prick; she led the soul of woman back to truth and redirected her coquetry into the paths of nature. To the originality and the affected charm sought by the woman of the day in labored sentiments and forced language she opposed simplicity, a basic simplicity, a simplicity of vocation, of tradition and of nature which she drew from her birth and her temper, from the order from which she sprang as well as from the tendency of her tastes, of her mind, of her cold reason, of her orderly soul, of her pitiless common-sense. Simplicity was not only her character, it was the study of her life, her preoccupation and her vanity; she perfected it, she pondered and polished it. She made of it a weapon against the realities and appearances of the world of that age. All those about her sought to shine and to dazzle; the mode was to catch the eye or attach the minds of others. Amid this universal mania of dramatizing oneself to the world, which at this time made the epithet reserved a killing condemnation and a cruel insult, she assumed the negative quality of reserve as her rule; and the motto of her person was the motto of her apartment: *Rien en relief* (nothing conspicuous). She made a show of "simplicity"; she played it against her century, going so far as to search for trivial images, household comparisons, metaphors drawn from the lowly objects in order to deprive her most ingenious ideas of any pretensions. In this age where the soul seemed unable to do without manners; where in life, in thought, in love, in everything rule and order were cast aside; where woman demanded a sort of frenzy of her sensations, this woman stood erect and firm, her soul remained wholly compounded of reason, she affected the earthy, she flaunted her ignorance,

limiting the system and plan of happiness to the repose of the individual. Instead of emerging from herself, she took refuge within herself. Fleeing from all effort, sorrow, and shock, she urged her faculties towards a certain nonchalance, she inclined her desires towards a sort of laziness. She maintained her peace, which was a philosophical renunciation, by leading a constant and regular life, strengthened by maxim and axiom. Moderation, the middle course in all things, was the secret of the tranquil, perfect equilibrium she established even in the grave movements of her sage heart. She evaded even the emotion of charity; one day she declared, in a cold phrase, like a breath of icy air: "I mistrust no one, for that is to act and judge; but I trust no one, for that is never embarrassing!"

Papillotage could not long resist the protest of this serene, clear, dry figure who in her own person brought her sex back to the reality of life and to the necessity of common-sense. Without fascination, without wit, ironical only in the example and contrariness of her mode of life, this woman, Madame Geoffrin, had the honor of momentarily altering her sex and of fashioning it after her own image. She silenced the cry of the woman of the eighteenth century: "If ever I could be calm, then, I dare swear, then I should find myself on the wheel!" She pacified her sex; she restored it serenity; she drew it out of the state of convulsion and intoxication in which Madame de Prie had taught it to live. And, with calm, she brought back *truth* into a society that had lost all notion of it. Her authority restored to honor sincerity of thought and naturalness in conversation. Soon these became social charms superior to all others. When she compares herself to ladies of society more beautiful than herself, gifted with more personality, animated by a lively desire to please; when she asks herself the reason of her superiority over these women, less sought after, less busy and less surrounded by the flatteries of the world, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse answers herself, saying that her success consists precisely in the fact that "she has

always seen the *true* in everything” and that, to this merit, she has joined that of “being *true* in everything.”

Thus woman simplified herself; she stripped herself of exaggeration; her language, her expressions, her mind and her heart returned to the *true*. She modeled herself upon *truth* in everything; she made it her measure; she adopted its imprint and accent. But in so doing she seemed to be reserving the qualities she had been wont to display and lavish about her. Things and people were no longer in her eyes other than what they literally were. Judgment took the place of sensation in her. Her thought now reacted only to ideas of practical bearing. Little by little, she was losing the instinct and illusion of spontaneity. There was nothing striking in her imagination, nothing impulsive and free in her sentiments. She became compressed, she detached herself from others; she withdrew within the narrow circle of her personality. She steeled herself against effusion and expansion. She fought shy of emotion; advancing into the peace of egotism, each day she narrowed the scope of her sensibility. The chill of her head descended into her heart. This reached such a point that, laying her hand on the heart, which she would not suffer to beat, but which, instead, she compelled to think, she could utter the *mot* (the great *mot* uttered by Madame de Tencin to Fontenelle): “Here is the seat of my brain!”

It was now that callousness, the final and definitive characteristic of an age ruled by the mind, became an invariable feminine quality. How many a word, how many an unconscious cry, reveals its presence! There are letters in which the genius of the woman of the eighteenth century is the very genius of callousness. It is like a sense, dominating the other senses, triumphing over the weakness and tenderness of woman, over her nature and her sex. Feminine callousness is everywhere apparent, unconcealed, crude and ingenuous, in cynicism or in grace, brutal or polished, terrifying or airy. It is revealed in words that dig an abyss

in the humanity of the age. It can be touched and breathed; it frightens and chills in this serious self-examination of a woman of the century, as she sees a child being embraced: "As for me, I have never been able to love anything!" This insensibility is frightening in love and in all other passions of youth; it is terrifying in the habits, in the relations, even in the friendships of old age. We can hear its last word in this dialogue of death. Only a century in which Montesquieu attributed a lady's great amiability to the fact that she had never loved anything, was capable of producing a scene of so sinister a sadness.

Madame du Deffand, old, blind, is seated in her *tonneau*, her old friend, Pont de Veyle, lies back in a *bergère* by the side of the chimney. They converse. "Pont de Veyle?"—"Madame?"—"Where are you?"—"Beside your chimney."—"Lying back with your feet on the andirons, as one does in the house of a friend?"—"Yes, Madame."—"It must be agreed that few *liaisons* are as old as ours."—"That is true."—"Ours has lasted fifty years!"—"Yes, fifty years and over."—"And in this long interval, not a cloud, not even the slightest shadow of a disagreement."—"That is what I have always marveled at!"—"But, Pont de Veyle, doesn't that arise from the fact that, fundamentally, we have always been very indifferent to one another?"—"That might well be, Madame."

One evening after supper, at the Palais Royal (it was one of those *petits jours* which brought intimate company together) the ladies were working about the round table. The Duchesse de Chartres, Madame de Montboissier and Madame de Blot were raveling; Madame de Genlis, seated between Monsieur de Thiers and the Chevalier de Durfort, was making a purse; the Duc de Chartres was walking up and down the salon with three or four men. The conversation fell upon the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. Madame de Blot, ordinarily circumspect and self-contained, began so lively and emphatic a eulogy that the Duc de Chartres and the

men walking about with him drew near. A circle formed around the table. Madame de Blot developed her argument boldly, conscious of her audience and of the eyes of the Duc de Chartres fixed upon her; and, excited by her own eloquence, she ended by exclaiming, "only the loftiest virtue could keep a woman of true sensibility from devoting her life to Rousseau, if she were certain he would love her passionately."

The cry of this woman was the cry of the woman of her century. The lips of this prude utter the great voice of her age and of her sex. Rousseau's prodigious influence; the magnetism of his genius; the intoxication of his books; his reign over the feminine imagination; the enthusiasm, the gratitude, the amorous and religious worship this imagination concentrated even about his person—Madame de Blot shows these with the vivacity and sincerity of public opinion, with the consciousness of all these women buying like a relic a bilboquet of Rousseau's, or kissing his writing in a little copy-book.

It was fitting that Rousseau inspire this cult and this adoration in woman. What Voltaire was to the mind of the man of the eighteenth century, Rousseau was to the mind of the woman. He emancipated it and refreshed it. He gave it life and illusion; he led it abroad and he elevated it; he called it to liberty and to suffering. He found it empty and he left it filled with ecstasy. Here was a moral revolution, immense in depth and scope, one which involved the future! When Rousseau appeared, it was Moses touching the rock; every living spring flowed forth again in woman.

He restored the strength and virtues of vitality to a world worn out by pleasure, weary of soul, ravaged by the sterility and selfishness of a society at its highest point of refinement and subtle corruption. What did this misanthropic apostle bring, this providential man, long-awaited by woman, invoked by the ennui of her heart summoned by this age suffering from lack of love, dying because it could

not devote itself? A flame, a tear: passion!—passion, which in spite of the opinion of the man who brought it to the eighteenth century, was to become, in the nineteenth century, so congenial to the very intellect of woman, that it formed the genius of the two great writers of her sex and the inspiration of their masterpieces.

At the breath of Rousseau, woman awakened. A tremulousness passed through the most secret recesses of her being. She vibrated to sensations, to emotions, to a thousand troublous thoughts. Tendernesses and voluptuousness were born anew within her, they penetrated to her very consciousness. Her imagination flooded her heart. Love appeared to her as a new sentiment, resuscitated and sanctified. Possession and the ravishment of love succeeded the love that was gallantry, the light and brilliant love of the eighteenth century. Love was no longer a whim amusing itself in good taste, it was an enthusiasm, mingled with a folly almost religious. Love became passion, and naught else but passion. It took on a language of flame, accents that might be those of a hymn. Seeing perfection in the beloved, Love made of it an idol and seated it in heaven. Love hovers in a thousand pictures and in a thousand divine ideas: paradise, angels, the virtues of saints and the delights of the heavenly sojourn. Love writes on its knees; on a paper bathed with tears. Love exalts itself in the battle of remorse and in the intoxication of sin. It grows noble through sacrifice, it purifies itself in expiation, it effaces weakness by duty. It is its own absolution, a virtue rendering all others unnecessary; it saves the soul of woman, in her strongest impulses, from the degradation of her body, by leaving her taste, appetite or regret for Purity and Beauty. Here was a sacred delirium, an ideal full of temptations, to which the *Nouvelle Héloïse* invited all the senses of the soul of woman, her faculties and her aspirations, in pages tremulous as the first kiss of Julie, and, like it, piercing, burning to the very marrow of her bones.

But it was not enough to restore to love this heart of

woman "melted and liquefied" in the fire of his novels: Rousseau further restored it to motherhood. He brought the child back to the breast of woman; he made her nourish it with the milk of her heart; once again he attached it to her entrails; and he taught the mother, as a woman has said, to recapture through this little creature huddled against her, and warming her soul "a second youth, hope of which recommences when her first youth is vanished."¹ Rousseau did more: he revealed to the mother of the eighteenth century the duties and the joys of that moral motherhood that is education. He inspired her with the idea of nurturing her children with her mind, as she has nurtured them with her body, and of watching them grow up beneath her kisses. Of the home he made a school.

He brought about the universal return of society towards the order of sentiments expressed by a word which seems to rise from every heart to every lip: sensibility, the sensibility to which usage soon linked the epithet "expansive."² A new language was created, a new moral and sentimental code with no basis or principle other than the sensibility everywhere expressed and paraded, and bringing so great a change to the physiognomy of this world, to its vocations and to its fashions, to the manifestations of its exterior, to the very coquetries of woman. Sensitive—this was all woman wished to be; it was the only praise she coveted. To feel and to appear to feel, became the interest and the occupation of her life; she no longer fell into ecstasy over anything save sentiment, which, she said, she "needs more than the air she breathes." It became almost customary for a woman to spend the night in tears and the day in mortal worries over a trifle. On sorrow's sweet prompting she rises to "the grandeur of grief." And what solicitude for the people she loves! If she discovers a sorrow in the heart of one who is dear to her, she preëmpts it, she makes it her

¹ Letters on the works and the character of Rousseau, by Madame de Staël, Paris, 1820.

² Portraits and characters, by Senac de Meilhan, 1813.

property, she speaks of nothing else, and she speaks of it with moist eyes. Is one of her friends ill? She flies to his side; she establishes herself there; she consults with the physicians; she gives out bulletins. If the danger increases, she no longer lets her servants sleep; hourly, they go forth for news. Tenderness takes on an air of fury. Exaltation fires every affection and emotion of woman.

In this great movement of sensibility, the very taste of woman was drawn towards the inclinations of her heart. She will have none but tender novels, stories softly titled "*Ariste, or the Charms of Chastity*," books which offered the ultimate reward of a kindly and sublime virtue in the dénouement, as in the crowning of the Rosière of Salency, devoured by all the women of the day, even by the *filles*. Now was the moment of the vogue of the *Trials of Sentiment*, the little moment of glory of d'Arnaud, the painter of sentiment, the beloved historian of tender souls. Woman must be moved, moved to tears. She was in that strange moral condition which made Madame de Staël say of her mother: "She was entertained by what made her weep." She rushed to the theater in order to weep. She wept hot tears when, in the *Cry of Nature*, a little child in swaddling-clothes appeared on the stage. At Diderot's *Father of the Family*, one could count as many handkerchiefs as women spectators. Women rushed to all the somber and pathetic plays, to Romeos and Hamlets, to plays like *Gabrielle de Vergy*; they flock to a pantomime of afflictions which seems to place the French stage under the patronage of the ashes of Deacon Pâris. And the greatest part of their pleasure lay in going to swoon at those dramas where "the heart is deliciously wrung and delicately torn by the terrible anguishes which form the charm of sentiment."

It seemed as though this heart of woman, big with tears, dilated by sensibility, could no longer live within itself. An extraordinary and irresistible need, an indefinable desire to

give of herself, to participate in human solidarity, to beat in concert with every breathing creature seized the heart of woman. From the individuals apprehended by her senses, the sympathy of woman spread to the most distant nations, to all men, over the whole of humanity, the notion of which she conceived for the first time. Humanity! it was to this great idea that the sensibility of women rose as though to its highest terms: it was towards humanity that all their studies, from positive to social, political, economic, philanthropic sciences, turned; it was humanity that governed the judgment of the greatest ladies; it was in the name of humanity that they granted their admiration and bestowed glory, genuine glory on men who were citizens, agriculturists, pioneers, benefactors of peoples.¹ Humanity! it was that fond illusion of Rousseau's work that led woman to her dream of abstract truths, and brought her down to the Revolution with treasures of enthusiasm fully prepared for Utopia.

Rousseau further refreshed the soul of woman by restoring to her a sense. This woman of so rare a spiritual elevation, so delicately endowed, possessing the faculty of perceptions so subtle and so deep, utterly lacked a grace of the soul, one sentiment, one sense: the sense of nature. In this age of extreme civilization and unparalleled sociability, the world was not only the great theater of life for woman, but the sole reason for interest, impressions and emotion. Alone, the world acted upon her and challenged her faculties. It was the milieu and the prison of her whole being. It was as though everything ended beyond that factitious *décor*; the horizon appeared to end. Where the rumor of Humanity dies down, and the silence of Divinity begins, woman found neither accordance nor harmony. Her heart remained closed, unawakened to nature; there passed over this heart neither the shadow of the leaf nor the breath of the wind. Her eyes, even, seemed closed to the tenderness

¹ Unpublished correspondence of Madame du Deffand. Paris, 1859.

of verdure; the country about her was no more than a great traversible emptiness.

We need but read a letter, a message or a diary penned by a woman in the country. As she writes, in the room of a château, her window open to sky and tree, no hint of sky or tree falls upon the paper. It would be idle to look for a fragrance, a reflection, an echo of the harvest, the throb of a bird's beating wing, that atmosphere which is, as it were, the natal air of a letter. No—tone, pen, ink, everything is Paris; she has never left Paris, and she pens mere details, sharp and spicy, casual observations on the men and women who people her solitude and make a society out of her desert. Her mind, in an atmosphere of dew, under the caress of morning, is what it might be pacing the pavement of the Rue Saint Dominique; it remains tense, guarded, unmoved, stubbornly unfeeling.

There was nothing, then, in the idea of the country alluring to feminine imagination. Its mysterious enchantment, the relaxation of the mind, the expansion of the senses, the mellowing of ideas, the pacifying serenity, the flowering of a being restored to his native air; the promises, pictures and attractions that life in the fields evokes to-day, were non-existent for her. A stale odor of *ennui* was all that emanated from Nature. A woman of wit confessed, nay, proclaimed the universal sentiment of her time and her sex, when she said, "that fine days granted by the sun are only for the common people and that there were no fine days for people of quality save in the presence of those they loved."¹ This was the period when society actually eclipsed the sun.

In brief, the country for a woman in the days of Louis XV meant what? Exile—and if not exile in the literal sense of the word, at least in its figurative sense. The

¹ *New Meditations on Women by a Lady of the Court*. Paris, 1727. Madame Necker gives another explanation: she finds the minds of her day too metaphysical, too preoccupied with abstractions, too withdrawn and far removed from real and external objects to draw enjoyment from the country. (*Mélanges*, Vol. I.)

country meant absence from Court, absence from Paris, a period of reform and economy, to expiate or economize and recoup the expenses, festivities and frills of the winter; a place of penitence it was, without resources or news, affording nothing in the way of society, whence one must be sending for conversation, congenial people, friends even, everything from Paris. To take their *salon* and their habits with them was the great preoccupation of all those who left town "to bury themselves," as they called it. It was only when the century was very old, indeed on the point of ending, that the country came to mean, not exile, but recreation, rest, a fashionable retreat, and the halcyon hours of family life. Young, crossing France in the reign of Louis XVI, found the first symptoms of a new *château* life, with great ladies and great lords really residing in the country for prolonged sojourns; a kind of affectation of foregoing Paris, of forgetting it, of sulking at it. Hitherto, what had country-life been? The life of Paris. In the *salon* with its tall windows looking out on woods and meadows, gaming lasted all day long, keeping people indoors and precluding all thought of walking. *Petit jeu* began in the morning, *Grand jeu* began after dinner, continued until supper, was resumed again after supper and went on far after midnight. Or else, if gaming is not to your liking, conversation claims you; and the hour for sleep strikes no earlier in the manor than in town. You rarely went to bed before morning, so much time did you take in patrolling your *good night* from room to room, in recounting an anecdote, in prolonging the evening by argument, remarks, retorts, stories, one last fire and flare of conversation. Awakening on the morrow, all these people, no sooner dressed, could think of nothing but the mail and the news awaited from Paris. The great event of the day was the arrival of the *Mercure de France*, painted by Lavreince as the only moment of interest in the country.

There is a very striking sign of this detachment of the

woman of the eighteenth century from nature, of her indifference, of her blindness. She failed to perceive it or breathe it even in love. She never associated sky, earth, storm or sunlight with her love. Never did she bring creation to conspire with her heart. Her happiness was deaf to the song of the lark; the countryside she crossed adds nothing of its gayety or of its melancholy to her sorrows or to her joys. Days she spent in the open, the heady fragrances of nature, irritating noons and heavy sultry hours caused her brain and senses so little exaltation that the art of seduction, supremely skilled and artful in the eighteenth century, never took them into account in its chances and means of success. At most the pursuer might find, in a brook running through a park, an occasion for familiarity, a pretext to press a hand denied him, to squeeze a waist that evaded him: such complicity, and no other, did seduction seek in nature against woman's obduracy.

Love-tales, accordingly, are all marked by this strange characteristic, the absence of nature. Only every now and then the characters enter from outdoors, from a place never designated, vague and secret, something like the lawn around a little house. Not a perspective, not a breath of air; always the same narrow, stifling scene, the boudoir, the *salon*, the subdued light of the apartment or the glimmer of candles, that same factitious illumination and that same factitious background of humanity. In book after book, we can trace this divorce of nature and love, this suppression of the landscape, this obliteration of sun, bird and star. Beyond the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, at the last extremity of the genius of the century, at its maddest paroxysm, we come upon novels where blood flows over slime; and there nature lies dead around the priapic scene like a nightmare; it is the desert, a desert where there is no longer an animal, a tree, a flower, even a blade of grass!

Rousseau reopens for woman, in his Elysium of Clarens, the lost paradise of field and wood. Flowers sown by the

wind, hedges of roses, thickets of lilacs, tortuous alleys, climbing plants, springs, running water, solitude, shadows—all these delights he reveals and makes her feel. He spreads before her eyes plain and hill, lake and mountain. He discloses to her that poetry of the landscape, of sky, cloud and tree, which gives a soul to the senses and senses to the soul. As at the note of the nightingale thrilling over his head through the enchanted night above the garden near Lyons, at his voice the eighteenth century rediscovers the harmonies of nature; it rediscovers that sentiment unknown in France, unknown in literature until Rousseau—Monsieur de Sainte-Beuve was the first to make this delicate observation—the sense of *the green, le sentiment du vert*.

And now women become “country-mad.” At last woman delights in life and in overhearing herself living. Sweet and mysterious harmonies, born of silence, rise to soothe her heart and mind. The stir of the wind, the joy of sunlight, the murmur of the fields, pervade her and associate themselves with her mind exactly as they associated themselves with the minds of the characters of Rousseau. She no longer merely enjoys a placid pleasure in the spectacles of nature; she undergoes an emotion full of ardent impulses. The tonic open air which she breathes easily and lightly gives her ideas a sort of blitheness. She yields to an enthusiasm where tenderness blends with emotion: the exaltation of Nature-worship will soon touch her sex. One fine evening, under the faintly glowing heavens, under that vault where the stars light up one by one for the day’s death, a woman, thrilled, enraptured, upborne from earth, seeking something feeling and thinking to hear and receive the effusion of her soul,—a woman, who was to be Madame Roland—finds the god of Rousseau in that darkling heaven above, and, from her casement on the *quai*, she raises this prayer to the vanished sun: “O Thou, whose very existence my reasoning mind denies and rejects, but whom my heart craves and longs to adore, primal intelligence, supreme

ruler, God all-powerful and all-kind, whom I would fain believe the author of all that delights me, accept my homage, and, if Thou be but an illusion, be mine, be mine forever."

CHAPTER XI

W O M A N I N H E R O L D A G E

A CHOICE OF THREE ends lay open to the woman of the eighteenth century when her youth waned: religious devotion, the *bureaux d'esprit* (intellectual salons), and court intrigue. Chevrier adds a fourth end: gaming and the habit of entertaining with games of chance.

As they approached old age, a certain number of women retired and practiced a life of religion, dedicating themselves to renunciation. They abandoned the world one evening, their *mouches* one morning; they visited the poor, they went to church. They would slip by on their way to a sermon, running to benediction, clad in dark hues, in a drab or russet mantle, with a coiffure low enough to let them edge into a confessional. A lackey followed them, bearing their Book of Hours in a red velvet bag.

But if we push past this picture, past the silhouette of the churchgoer, if we sound the depths and challenge the soul of her piety, we find no contemporary document to vouch for one of those vast, profound and violent currents of religion, that wring the heart and that sweep everything headlong before them. The piety of the preceding century, severe, hard, ardently intolerant and still hot with the passions of religious wars, wanes and degenerates in this century, too small and flaccid for it. Piety had been a consuming flame, now it was no more than a hearth-glow kept up by custom. This gentle, lukewarm piety has not heat enough to carry woman's passions towards God; it provokes none of those sudden, supreme effects of grace, annihilating visitations of a divine vocation; it

never ravishes her, it never fills her and masters her wholly. Thus the eighteenth century offers few noble immolations or austere, rigorous retreats in which women confine their closing days. Piety in this society is nothing more or less than an easy mental discipline, a riddance of worldly superfluities and fatigues, an arrangement that simplifies material life and rules moral life. Piety moreover is a proof of delicacy, almost of elegance, the mark of a person of gentle birth. It is *de ton*; in the best company, it is conceded to be the best known fashion of growing old and finishing one's days, the most fitting, the most worthy of a certain rank in society, briefly, the most decent.

Decorum—there lies the principle of woman's religious devotion in the eighteenth century. Indeed, on what other foundation could religion rest in this century of critical tempers and passionate souls, in this age when little girls in the convent already entertained doubts and expressed them so intelligently that they embarrassed Massillon and disarmed punishment? This age rebelled against renunciation; even on her death-bed woman clung to love, and when her confessor reproached her for allowing the carriage of her lover to stand day and night at her door: "Ah, Father," she cried, "how happy you make me! I thought he had forgotten me!"

Piety is dead, piety is fashion, a worldly concern, a spiritual appearance; it was a social zeal, the soul of exteriorities. In her parish a lady keeps a chair with her crest on it and she goes to mass to keep up her position, for decency's sake, for her own sake, for the sake of others, and for that of her servants. For a while there was a mass much in vogue with women: the *perfumed* mass, a mass sung at two o'clock, before dinner, at the Saint-Esprit. No sooner was this mass forbidden, than the churches were deserted, except on Sunday. And only a momentary panic, the menace of another year One Thousand launched from the dizzy heights of Academe, the appearance of a comet

or a study by Lalande on the destructive functions of comets could bring women back to the services and confessional from which they had been slowly straying. However, many churches were filled at Lent; sermons were jammed; but it was the panoply of the pulpit and the delivery of the preacher that attracted a crowd. If the popular preacher fell ill, if he failed the faithful without due notice, if an unknown, inglorious Capuchin ascended the pulpit, the worshipers immediately turned their backs on pew, preacher and God. They left the church as they would a theater; they went to it as one goes to the play. Certain women even went there as to a box-party, to amuse themselves, to create a scandal, to disconcert the eloquence of the priest, much as they might heckle the effects of an actor. There is the well-known instance of one who wagered she could disturb Father Renaud, the preacher made fashionable by the conversion of Madame de Mailly, and who, by dint of coquetries, of oglings and of shameless display, won her wager.

But was the pulpit yet worthy of respect? Had it preserved that dignity of simple, strong speech, which invests it with sanctity and surrounds it with grandeur? Was it not rather a bar where the *bel esprit* of the priest seemed, when he spoke of religion, to plead for the praise of God? The eloquence of faith became an eloquence highly schooled, allusive, piquant, sown with new thoughts, embroidered with anecdotes, lightened by sallies and thin personalities. It spoke to the world in the language of the world, and clove to the generation, which it cursed accommodatingly, with grace, with wit, almost affectionately. Every mundane echo, all the rumors of Court and Town, all the politics of State, hummed and vibrated through the scriptural texts which are now a humdrum rigmarole in the mouths of the great masters of the divine word, in the mouth of an Abbé Maury.

But beside this eloquence which still at times retained a loftiness of rhetoric and a virility of declamation, a new

Word emanated from the pulpit, permeated women, and passed from their minds to their senses. The new Word was all charm, elegance and coquetry. Pretty and sweet, it ticked from blandishment to epigram, from epigram to antithesis. It touched only pretty subjects, it raised only such sins as were fragrant with sex. It dealt only with the temptations of society, with *games, spectacles, adornment, conversations, promenades, love of pleasures*; charming settings in which the preacher painted the fires of hell in rosy colors, and folded in tin-foil, disguised under light tints of wit, a moral drawn from poet and novelist. His delivery was luscious; his silvery voice took on new unction, at the end of a harmonious period, by a marshmallow paste; his lips lingered on texts chosen from the most amorous verses of the Song of Songs, followed by two little parts, very gracefully imagined and neatly turned, wherein the most gallant and delicate charity played with the legends of the Woman of Samaria, of the woman taken in adultery, of Mary Magdalen, as with miniatures by Charlier. This corruption of the sacred word left its traces everywhere. Its features and its proof are to be found in pamphlets on morals, its spirit in the religious books of the day, in the books of the Abbé Berruyer, and in that *Religion proved by Facts* where the charm and the piquancy of the style lend such sweetness to the loves of the patriarchs that its circulation had almost to be stopped. How could such oratory prevail against the trend of the century? What strength had it to admonish souls, to touch faith to its secret depths, to restore God in the human heart? It was itself one of the voices of the world and by no means the least sensuous. It had nothing moving or authoritative, nothing to impress an audience with ideas which meditation prolongs like sounds echoing under a vault. Its greatest effects resembled the music of an opera; they tickled the ear, and fell flat on the soul.

How then shall we explain woman's accesses of piety, the resolutions which often seized her, her sudden and

momentarily ardent conversions? By love, disappointment or despair in love? A love sorrow usually turned her mind to religion and prompted her to call in a priest. The priest comes and the ensuing scene runs much like that between the Abbé Martin and Madame d'Épinay. Madame d'Épinay having begun by longing to flee to a convent, the Abbé Martin very calmly, with the calm of long habit, informs her flatly that the mother of a family will hardly make a good Carmelite; that these too sudden and violent returns to God inspire him with but scant confidence; and when he has drawn from Madame d'Épinay the motive and the cause of this great ardor of piety, he retires quietly, like the practiced priest and man of the world he is, certain that the thought of God will endure in her soul only till the coming of a new lover. This moment of weakness, when her lover abandoned her, was the only occasion in the life of the woman of the eighteenth century when she thought of a priest as of a comforting minister: God occurred to her only at such hours as something she would like to love.

Sometimes, however, before Time and the advent of old age, woman was won to religion by weariness of society, by the loneliness of her household, by the free ways and loose bonds of marriage. In this age, we encounter certain gentle and weak souls, easily wearied, wounded, dazzled by light and sound, who early sought a peace of habit and the muffling shadow of life in religion. But what pitfalls, temptations and assaults faced these delicate and languid women, still young (at least for God), these *dévotés* who had reached merely the age of attractive maturity, as they plodded toward their salvation, inch by inch. A *dévoté* was the forbidden fruit of love, the golden apple of gallantry. The libertinage of the period was too exquisite, too rare and too keen, the imagination of its senses tended too far in pursuit ever of the difficult, the extraordinary and the new, it was too sorely tempted by every challenge, not to make of this woman its ambition,

its desire and its designated prey. For the subtle and so delicately corrupt debauchery of the age, a *dévoté* was nothing less than the "King's morsel of gallantry." A delicious sensuality seemed to lurk in this woman. She was so different from others with her packets of neckerchiefs over her throat; her *corps* rose to her chin; she wore no rouge; her complexion was white; she suggested the charm of freshness, quiet and repose; she was like a reflection of retreat. A thousand secret and tender allurements, a penetrating coquetry permeated the air about her with the suavity and sweetness of the exquisite perfumes shed, in the novel *Thémidore*, on the fine linen and toilette of Madame de Doligny. Here were unique women to stir the Don Juan to dreams of "the acme of pleasure," to promise him what the jargon of roués calls "a relish, a succulence," what a book of the day, Laclos' *Liaisons Dangereuses* calls "unction in voluptuousness." Nor must we forget another spur to the libertine in an age when love liked humiliation and suffering in woman: the struggle of the *dévoté*, the rending of her heart, her resistance to sin, this new spectacle of a soul so long in succumbing, struggling against itself, lapsing from duty to remorse, regaining self-possession in her fall, and realizing herself in her shame.—Here was enough to provoke many a man to an adventure that promised him, with piquancy and savor, such entertainment for his cruelest vanities. Nevertheless, exposed as she was on that side, the *dévoté* rarely succumbed to the attack of the libertine. She was afraid of scandal, feared renowned amorists and their compromising ways, disliked their hearty and frivolous manners; and if she happened to yield, it was rather to some young man quite new to society, happy in silence, jealous of the mystery of his happiness. Or sometimes, the *dévoté* gave herself to a type of man who glided noiselessly into her intimacy, and whose position promised her fault secrecy, that salve of sin.

But, however dangerous it might be, what could love avail against devotion, what were the surrender of the senses

and the defeat of the heart, whether clandestine or open, compared to the spirit of the times, to the breath of incredulity that permeated woman little by little and filled her with doubts, resistance or revolt? It was her mind more than anything else that, each day more resolutely, abandoned the beliefs of faith. Everything that was troubling the thoughts of men, the disturbance caused by book, pamphlet or idea reached woman on the rebound. To grasp, in its exact measure, the shriveling, the suffocation of religion in the contemporary women, we need but cast a glance on the government of women by the Church, on their spiritual *direction*.

Direction was no longer the great, obscure, fearful and absolute power of the seventeenth century. The director was no longer master of hearth and home, the terrible minister of Salvation, who, through a woman, held everything under his hand and ruled the conscience, will and service of the family. What had he now become? A companion, a partner at Whist, a secretary, a reader, a steward, a superintendent of household expenses, who put order in the kitchen and made peace in the antechamber. A *moliniste* was chosen if the wind blew the way of *molinisme*, to be replaced easily enough by a *janséniste*, if the wind turned; for he was a familiar without influence in the house. Such were the personage and his rôle; for a revelation of him in all his abasement, we need but read of the director of Madame Allain, in that charming and vivid story of *Monsieur Guillaume*.

A true, all-powerful, tyrannical direction existed no longer. It lay no longer in the humiliated Church or in the discredited priest; it now dwelt in the new triumphant religion. Its favors and powers, its practice and domination were entirely in the hands of philosophy and at the discretion of philosophers. These were the new direction and the new directors of woman. It was philosophers who took the comfortable place at hearth, table and family-council; who inherited the influence and the right to preach and make de-

cisions; who opened and closed Madame's door; who advised her on her lovers; who imposed their knowledge upon her; who made her soul their creature and her husband their friend. Everywhere, in every house of any reputation, by the side of every woman enlightened enough to desire her philosophical salvation, some such man, some saint of the encyclopedia, was installed. Nor could anything dislodge him thereafter. There was d'Alembert who ruled the Geoffrin household; or Grimm, reigning over the household of the Baron d'Holbach, forbidding the latter to buy a country-house which did not suit Diderot. There was also Duclos, the great social tyrant who at la Chevrette, beside Madame d'Épinay, revealed the omnipotence and depth of this lay direction. He interfered between husband and wife; he lectured the wife; he told her of her present lover's infidelities and spoke a good word for her future lover; he entered by sheer force into all her affairs, and ordered her, in the name of public opinion, to leave the former for the latter; he put her on her guard against the love, friendship and moral severity of people she esteemed; he poisoned her with suspicions; he filled and darkened her with mistrust, terror and remorse; he chided, reprimanded, and dominated her through the torments he caused her and the worries he prompted in her heart; he established himself in her family, in her relations and everywhere about her; he read her letters and re-wrote them; he threw her papers into the fire; he won her husband's confidence; he gave orders to the tutor and presided over the education of her children. He laid his hands on everything, he mingled in everything, he laid down the law on everything. His boorish tenacity, evil and insinuating, assumed the grandeur and terror of a diabolic possession; and while he hovered with sarcasm over this shuddering woman, the shade of Tartuffe passed across the wall behind him.

A single circumstance prevented philosophers and philosophy, the men and the ideas of the new party, from gaining a complete hold over woman. By the character of her

sex and the nature of her faculties, the woman of the eighteenth century, like the woman of every century, was not strong enough for disbelief. Thus her lack of strength and her need of a prop would seem to be the one reason for her religion, a reasoned religion, as, for instance, that of a du Deffand, inspired by a mild impulse of salvation, the return to God of a spirit terrified by the void. In this connection, a certain priest has shed a brilliant light on the heart of the woman and of the age. The Abbé Galiani showed the last roots to which faith clings in the decadence of scepticism, when he wrote in his lofty idiom: "After all is said and done, incredulity is the greatest effort the spirit of man may make against his own instincts and tastes. . . . It is a question of depriving oneself forever of all the pleasures of the imagination and of all taste for the supernatural; it amounts to emptying the entire sack of knowledge. And man needs certainty. To deny and doubt all things always; to live, destitute of every notion and idea of the sublime sciences, etc.; what a horrible void! . . . what non-existence! . . . what an effort! It is thus a proven fact that the majority of men, and especially of women, whose imagination is double ours . . . could not be agnostic; and those capable of agnosticism would be able to sustain the effort only at the height of their soul's youth and strength. If the soul grows old, some belief reappears. . . ."

But this faith which shrank, retired and escaped before doubt, is itself an effort. Inevitability, surrender, self-sacrifice and love did not quicken it. When we abandon what Galiani calls "beliefs which reappear" and overlook conversions like that of Madame Geoffrin or of Madame de Chaulnes, which seemed to be inspired by the feebleness of age; when we estimate and study the religion of the century in those who exemplified it constantly and established its character, we find that the religion of the most sincere and devout women lacked unction. It could not rid itself of an air of aridity. It retained a critical sense and spirit on

all matters. There is a chill in everything these persons of deep religion have bequeathed us: in their lives and thoughts, in all that fell from their consciences, their lips and their pens. Love of God seemed never to dwell in them save as a cerebral principle. They did so much reasoning in their prayers; they regarded all enthusiasm with such reserve; they banished all impulse from religious virtues, and made them so philosophical and rational; they clung so closely to a purely moral sanctity, that they remind one of Rousseau who thought that Madame de Créqui had not "a soul tender enough ever to be an ecstatic *dévoté*." These women believed with all their might; but they could not believe with all their heart.

But, in this century, fashion was to open up a new avenue for this desiccated religion. It was to give it a new purpose and almost a new name. A religion that could no longer satisfy or nourish itself was to find a new life and food in Charity. It abandoned its passive rôle and escaped from the oratory, from its retreat, from silence, from its habits of contemplation, from its solitary elevations and from the practices the old religion employed to destroy movement, action and initiative in the pious woman, so she might abandon herself to God and remain buried in her abandonment. Philanthropy now entered into religion; divine worship, following the current of the age, descended from adoration of the Creator to solace of the creature. Thenceforward, from the day when woman discovered charity to resuscitate and express her faith, activity possessed her; inspiration drew her out of herself: she belonged to others. A spirit as nobly stirred as that of Madame Louise de France was to drive her out of her house from earliest morning. Alone, on foot, through rain and cold, in any weather, she trudged from the Arsenal to the Hospital for Incurables, from the Palais to the Ile Saint-Louis, from the Lieutenant of Police to the Mother Superior of the Salpêtrière. Twenty officers received her depositions; all the consultants of Paris knew her. She was forever to be met on the road to Ver-

sailles; at Versailles, she was to be seen in all the offices, at all the *toilettes*, at chapel-service and at the *cassettes*. Hospital and prison were choice scenes for this new devotion; it endowed the Conciergerie Prison with an infirmary; through its offices, improvements were made in the Hôtel-Dieu and those beds disappeared in which eight men lay together, and illness, agony and death slept together under the same sheet. This humane virtue of kindness, bursting forth and spreading abroad toward the close of the century proved to be the true, and perhaps the only instinctive and emotional religion of woman.

Another faith also appeared in the depths of the contemporary woman, but secret, hidden and as though ashamed. In a coign of her firm, free and inveterately personal soul, in a corner of that rational spirit seemingly delivered from prejudice by natural philosophy, free from tradition and respect of religion, there remained a popular foible: superstition. The shadow of terror and the mystic faith of the sixteenth century still darkened the imagination of the eighteenth. The greatest ladies still remembered ancient recipes and were vaguely conscious of ideas such as that by which one might recover a drowned child if one had a poor woman of the populace light a candle on a cup thrown on the water and floating forward to set fire to the little bridge of the Hôtel-Dieu. At the height of this philosophical century, women believed in the luck associated with the rope with which men had been hanged and in the omen of spilled salt or of crossed forks; she nourished fears such as those of Madame d'Esclignac who caused the wits of Paris so much amusement at her suppers. Horoscopes were not forgotten: on cradles of little girls, Boulainvilliers, Colonne and others drew a goodly number of them which kept women, to whom a fatal future had been predicted, in a state of trembling, and, sometimes, as in the case of Madame de Nointel, through fright and *idée fixe*, brought about the realization of their prophecies. Women were as naïve as the Princesse de Conti, who promised the Abbé

Leroux an equipage and livery if he found the philosopher's stone for her; others nourished illusions like that of the Duchesse de Ruffec, who spent her life with sorceresses of sorts who promised her rejuvenation. Unfortunately the drugs, very costly, ill-chosen or insufficiently exposed to sunlight, always had a defect which made the operation fail. Here was an amazing credulity, but for the most part not so very different from the superstitions acknowledged and exhibited by the most virile and independent of women. We can hear their voices and cries under the pen of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who, on her death-bed, begged Monsieur de Guibert not to sign the lease for his new apartment on a Friday. A Friday! her hand trembled as she spoke of that terrible day whose fatalities she cited: "It was Friday, August 7, 1772, that Monsieur de Mora left Paris; it was Friday, May 6th, that he left Madrid; it was Friday, May 27th, that I lost him forever."

Faith in fortune-tellers lived on, popular and obstinate. And from the beginning of the century to the end, a card-teller would keep great ladies waiting their turn on their broken-down chairs. All of them slipped in at night, incognito, with furtive step, veiled, their faces sometimes disguised; and Madame de Pompadour, escaping one evening from the Palace of Versailles, was to consult in the utmost secrecy the famous Bontemps, who, in coffee-grounds, read the fortunes of Bernis and Choiseul.

Before the reign of Louis XV, there had been bolder women who wished to do without intermediary, to have their luck at first hand, personally, from the devil. A mistress of the Regent, Madame de Sery, had opened her salon to séances of evocation, where Boyer, the magician produced by Madame de Senecterre, saw, during the life of Louis XIV, the royal crown on the head of the Duc d'Orléans. In the assemblies held at the house of the Dowager Princesse de Conti, there was a divinatory society to which shepherds brought hares possessed of the evil spirit. At the house of Madame de Charolais, at the Château de

Madrid, there were Sabbaths, accused rather of voluptuousness, it is true, than of Satanism. In the very middle of the century, at the height of Louis XV's reign in 1752, a Monsieur de la Fosse caused the Devil to appear; he spoke to a whole company of women in the quarries of Montmartre, and Madame de Montboissier was sent to a convent, there to expiate her participation in these scenes of magic. Curiosity for the Devil secretly excited the thoughts of women; and throughout the Spring of that year, people found grounds for mirth in the misadventure of two ladies, the Marquise de l'Hospital and the Marquise de la Force, who had wished to see the Devil. Having warned them they would not see him until they were undressed, the sorceress robbed them of clothes, money and linen, leaving them in a state of nudity sworn to by an officer of the police.

The Devil! What a strange apparition in the century of Voltaire! What a strange obsession and how it revealed the insensate need of the supernatural in the woman of the age! Conquered by the chill and aridity of contemporary science and logic, by its practical, clear, incisive and positive spirit; finding no imaginative emotions or mental visions in religion, woman aspired instinctively to the supernatural that nourishes and delights her soul. From the very outset, she was disposed towards and attached to such false prodigies as bore the thoughts of her sex away from the truth of life, and its senses even from the realities of fact. Thus, throughout the entire century, she showed almost an impatience to deliver herself to thaumaturges. She invoked hocus-pocus, she aspired and devoted herself to it. We find those who neither dreamed of Sabbaths, nor invoked the Devil, at the beginning of the century, in the house of the old Marquise des Deux Pônts, at the Convent of Bellechasse, attending the ecstatic performances of the *Convulsionists*. Then, when the enthusiasm for convulsions has abated, the idolaters throng to Mesmer, who brought magnetism and its mysteries, somnambulism and its miracles, hyperphysics of science and the supernatural of medicine.

What fanaticism for the initiator and what a cult about him! What devotion to the fluid! Madame de Gléon and Madame de Saint-Martin owned to mesmerism. The Marquise de Coaslin, the adept emeritus, who presided over the experiments conducted by Monsieur de Puységur, preached its doctrines to sceptics. Vengeance was visited upon its persecutors, (that is to say its parodists) by the Duchesse de Villeroy, who expelled Radet from her house because he had given a performance of the *Banquet of Health* there and "as a new Aristophanes" had sought to "drive the new Socrates-Mesmer to hemlock." To crown all the magic of a century when woman had need of charlatans to replace God in her soul, and of fantasmagoria to serve as her faith, coevally with Mesmer and Mesmerism, Cagliostro appeared, and Martinism, which evoked shades and seated the living at supper with the dead.

In those days, however, women in their old age found a refuge other than faith or credulity. There remained the great resource and fashionable occupation, invented by the eighteenth century to fill the days of the mature in age. This was the *Bureaux d'Esprit*, a sort of retreat of the heart in the pleasures of the intelligence, in peace and in the amiable pleasures of literature. Here was a charming invention, destined to shed a grace of the intellect and a delicacy upon the latter years and passions of women, and to lend her spirit a final gayety and a supreme elegance.

Moreover this rôle in which the intelligent woman took refuge was a great one, the greatest, perhaps, a woman might play in a society with no god save the mind, no love or at least no curiosity save literature. The *bureaux d'esprit* were the salons of public opinion. And no matter who their mistress, whether of the financial or *bourgeois* world, they reduced and effaced the most aristocratic *salons* of Paris. These were the *salons* that occupied the attention of Europe, and to which the foreigner sought the honor of admittance. Reputation, favor and success were in their power. They promised fame and they led to the Academy. They con-

ferred a public on the authors who frequented them, a name on those who had none and an immortality on the women who presided over them. It was through them that so many women governed the taste of the moment, enlightened or blinded it and ordered idolatry or injustice of it. For the power of the *bureaux d'esprit* was too great and too intoxicant for woman not to abuse of it, and compromise it by partiality, violence in appreciation, zeal, lack of measure and the spirit of exclusion. Each *bureau d'esprit* came to limit the circle of genius, imagination and talent to its own supper-table. Many began by being a party and ended by being a coterie, a little family of petty vanities that laid down the fashion according to their shadow, reputation according to their own names and literature at the door of the *salon* that smiled upon them. It was then that with affectation and wit came the mania of reputation, the usurping of popularity, intrigue and precaution, the art of praising in order to be praised, the art of courting fame a little through oneself but much more through others—defects which posterity will doubtless view more indulgently than did the comedy of the age.

Dorat directed *Les Prôneurs* (the Eulogists) against the *bureaux d'esprit*; the comedy abounded in neat verses, struck in the manner of Grasset, and eminently characteristic. The public recognized one of the great literary and philosophical rulers, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, now under the mask of Eglé of whom the poet says:

She speaks, she thinks and she hates like a man

now under the features of Madame de Norville, the heroine of the play whom Dorat shows at work, busied in forging some little reputation like Guibert's, which the public consented to accept out of nonchalance—one of those reputations that are blown like glass and that hover, for three months at least, in the world of clubs and suppers. Nor could any one fail to recognize this godmother of great men, captured and presented in the life, in the midst of her work

of protecting and engineering success and celebrity; surprising public opinion, dazzling it with words and praises uttered from her house to every echo; swearing that all Paris would fight over the genius she was hatching and that the Court would find it divine; vowing to obscurity all who had not yet supped at her house; and undertaking to make their names anathema to the Electors or to cause the English to abhor them. Nor was Madame Geoffrin forgotten in their satire. To her Wednesdays fell the irony of the verse:

Only on that day do people reason in Paris

and the scene of the foreigners awaiting Madame de Norville for dinner before inducing Europe to adopt the customs of the house was aimed at the *salon* where almost all Europe passed in visit, and at the woman whom Germany, Austria and Poland received as they would the ambassador of the spirit of France. But so great a *salon* deserved better, and soon it had the honor of a special satire, the *Bureaux d'esprit*, a somewhat brutal and at times crude piece of persiflage at the expense of that seminary of academicians and prytaeum of Encyclopedists. In this play, the Chevalier de Rutlige successively presents La Harpe under the name of *du Luth*, Marmontel as *Faribole*, Thomas as *Thomassin*, the Abbé Arnaud as *Calcès*, the Marquis de Condorcet as the *Marquis d'Osimon*, d'Alembert as *Restigine*, the Baron d'Holbach as *Cucurbitin*, Diderot as *Cocus*—a carnival of philosophers led by Madame de Folincourt, a caricature of *mardi gras*, whose masks were endlessly being raised by an allusion to the journey to Warsaw.

When we abandon satire and view the *bureaux d'esprit* through the *mémoires* and history of the times, we find that the first we encounter still preserved the traditions of the seventeenth century. It was conducted by a woman who continued the moral doctrines of the past. This woman, Madame de Lambert, had pointed out the glory of "*l'honnête homme*" to her son as the end of all his ambitions. She was a person of discipline and rule; she held, and



Photo Giraudon

CARMONTELLE—*Madame d'Esclavelles, niece of Madame d'Epinaÿ, playing chess with M. de Linant, her nurse watching.*

wished others to hold, views on what are called morality and happiness vastly different from those of the common people. Common people she defined as those who thought and acted in a low and vulgar fashion, so that she saw many common people at Court. To such rare elevation of soul, she united a practiced, refined and simple mind, and the definition of politics and the art of pleasing, at once subtle and lofty, that she left behind, give us sufficient indication of her character as the mistress of a household and of the tone and manner of her grace. The only flaw in Madame de Lambert and in her *salon* was a return, somewhat further than Madame de Maintenon, to the Hôtel de Rambouillet, with too great a respect for what one of her friends called "the barriers of superiority and of preciosity." In this salon, where no card was ever seen, every Wednesday after a dinner which Fontenelle, the Abbé de Montgaut, Sacy, the President Hénault and the best of the academicians attended, works about to appear were read, their success in the world was outlined and their future was announced and baptized. Nor was it only the fortune of books, but the fortune of people that was ordered here. In the middle of the conversation, candidacies were sounded and future elections of the Academy, the doors of which Madame de Lambert opened to more than twenty of her protégés, were arranged; for hers were the honor and skill of first making her *salon* the antechamber to the Academy: Madame Geoffrin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse merely succeeded her and once again awarded the seats she had already given. These literary lectures lasted all Wednesday afternoon. In the evening, everything, scene and actors, changed; a new company of young men and young women sat down to a brilliant supper, and, the gayety of a seemly gallantry stilled the memory of the readings and banished the tumult of the morning.

That unfortunate Madame Fontaine-Martel, so blithely buried in one of Voltaire's letters, received a company composed almost entirely of *beaux esprits* (to whose wit she

lent herself without understanding it any too well) and of women—a rarity in this day—without recognized lovers.

Madame Denis held another little intellectual *salon* and provided her literati with good *bourgeois* suppers, informal and very gay. Here the extravagant humor of Cideville, the heavy laughter of the Abbé Mignot and of various Gascon abbés had free play; and Voltaire came, to sit down at his ease, when he could escape from the Marquise du Châtelet and from the suppers of society.

Almost as distant from Madame de Lambert's as the trees of Cracow from the Hôtel de Rambouillet was another *salon*, the bureau of Parisian news, the dark room where day by day the seals of history were opened and where the echo and magic lantern of events and facts, of men and women, of pulpit, Academy, and Court, of every stir of news or silhouette were tested. It was an envied, frequented and considerable *salon*; to be admitted to it as a *parishioner* was a great honor. Madame Doublet conducted it at the Convent of the Filles-Saint-Thomas, in an apartment where she spent forty consecutive years without moving outside of it. Bachaumont, wearing the long haired *perruque* invented by the Duc de Nevers, presided there from morning till night. The Abbé Legendre, Voisenon, (the courtier of the house), the two Lacurne de Saint-Pelaye, the Abbés Chauvelin and Xaupi, the Falconets, the Mairans, the Mirabauds, all of them *parishioners*, arrived at the same hour and took their seats in the same armchairs, each below his portrait. Two great ledgers lay open on the table. Each arrival noted in its pages, the positive or doubtful, the absolute or relative truth in a piece of news. Here was the cradle of these *Nouvelles à la main* which, through sifting and discussion, gained such esteem, that people would ask of an assertion: "Does that come from Madame Doublet's?" And since these items of news, copied by the lackeys of the house, spread about the town and were sent to the provinces for a subscription-price of six, nine and twelve pounds per month; since, under the name of *Feuille manu-*

scrire, they formed a sort of little free press which did not spare the government its criticisms, the Lieutenant of Police became very much exercised, from 1753 onward, about stopping Madame Doublet's news and moderating the tone of her *salon*. In the name of d'Argenson's ministry, he bid her put an end to the extreme speeches uttered at her house, to prevent their divulgation and to keep away those who made them. Madame Doublet promised to mend her ways; but ledgers, news and the hostility of the speakers resumed their tenor so blithely that the minister—a minister whom Madame Doublet had the honor of having for nephew—Monsieur de Choiseul, wrote: “. . . After the nuisances which emerge from Madame Doublet's establishment I could not help informing the King of this fact, and of the intolerable imprudence of the news which emanate from this woman, my much-beloved aunt; in consequence, His Majesty has ordered me to bid you go to Madame Doublet's and to inform her that if henceforward a single item of news comes from her house, the King will lock her up in a convent, whence she can no longer distribute news as impertinent as it is contrary to the service of the King.”

In spite of the threat, Madame Doublet persevered. She rallied new rebels in Foncemagne, Devaux, Mairobert and d'Argental; *Frondeuses*, whose names were Madame du Rondet, Madame de Villeneuve, Madame de Beseval and Madame du Boccage. And this little Fronde, which a few years later was to become Bachaumont's newspaper, began anew in her salon with more animation and spirit than ever, made even bolder by her intimate friend, Madame d'Argental, who, through the pen of her valet-de-chambre, Gillet, soon organized another center of news.

There was a *salon* in the world of finance devoted to the *bel esprit*. It was Madame Dupin's. At one time Rousseau was her son's tutor, and, according to gossip, she dismissed him on days when the academicians visited her.

But the great *bureau d'esprit* of the first half of the eighteenth century was a *salon* which seemed to be the

native home of the intellect. Here the man of letters found a welcome, liberty and advice, applause to give him confidence, a smile to encourage him, inspiration and emulation to quicken his imagination and conversation in the charming audience of a mistress of tale house who listens and hears, who seizes main features and *nuances*, who feels as a woman and judges as a man. This salon belonged to Dubois's former mistress, Madame de Tencin. Restoring Mademoiselle de la Sablière's familiar and maternal protection to letters, on the first of the year, she used to give her *ménagerie*, her *beasts*, a present of two yards of velvet for a change of breeches. In this salon, the first in France to received a man at his intellectual value, the litterateur began the great rôle he was destined to play in the society of that age; it was from here, from the *salon* of Madame de Tencin, that he made his way to other *salons* and rose, step by step, to dominate a society which at the close of the century was to grant him so large a place in the state. By means of attentions, of consideration and of affection, Madame de Tencin lavished her graces and powers on writers; she paid court to them, she attached them to her by the services she rendered them, she surrounded them with affection; she needed them and enjoyed them with a natural, instinctive, disinterested sentiment, free of all affectation, calculation of influence, or bargain of gratitude. Amid the fevers and myriad labors of her imagination, devoured by intrigue, confounding love and business, this woman, ardent under her appearance of indolence, welcomed men of talent or genius, hastened to the amusements of the mind, enjoyed comedy, novel or witticism, with a heart, a passion and a soul that seemed to escape from her life and abandon themselves utterly to the joys of her mind. What intellectual life, what movement, what vivacity of idea and idiom in the *salon* this woman collected exclusively from among men of letters and quickened for her pleasure. Here Marivaux brought depth to subtlety; here Montesquieu awaited the passage of an argument to return it with swift or powerful

hand. Here Mairan uttered an idea in a word, and Fontenelle commanded silence with one of the delicate stories he seemed to have found halfway between heaven and earth, between Paris and Badinopolis. The three *salons* of Madame du Deffand, of Madame Geoffrin and of Made-moiselle de Lespinasse were to recall the conversation of Madame de Tencin's; but they could not make any one who had heard it, forget it.

A woman who had abandoned the hope of happiness, but who pursued the illusion of entertainment, a woman sick to death of others but disgusted with herself, and who would have preferred, as she said herself "the sexton of the Minimes for company to an evening spent alone," a blind woman who no longer possessed any senses, tact, or warmth in her darkness and her aridity other than her mind, Madame du Deffand, summoned the supreme distraction of the age and the noise of conversation and of society, of people and of ideas continually to her side so they might help her to live. Rare, indeed, was a silent moment in this salon¹ with its draperies of moire and flame-colored knots, in this department in the Rue Saint Dominique, at the Convent of Saint Joseph, accustomed to the silence of the retreats of Madame de Montespan. Neither the daily suppers laid for three or four people, nor the extremely frequent suppers when twelve or thirteen people sat down at table were sufficient. Every week (at first on Sundays, later on Satur-

¹In the canvas entitled in the Cochin catalogue: "The Angora Cats of Madame du Deffand" there is a description of her room, which, when the blind woman was ill or ailing, became a *salon* for her familiars. "A corner of the chimney, before which an ample *bergère*, with wooden feet and large, soft cushions, spreads its rustic arms; under the *bergère*, a wicker wool-basket looking like a country-basket; against the chimney, a *servante* (a little side-table) placed below a small *étagère* bookshelf with three rows of books; in the corner of the room, a corner-piece with a few pieces of porcelain; in the back, in a flat and uninterrupted woodwork without ornament or molding, a glass door opening out onto the darkness of a little *cabinet*, and, in the alcove beyond, the head of a bed, apparently covered by a flowered Persian damask, which also adorns the wall on which is a small dial-case clock. Such is Madame du Deffand's bedroom. And for all inhabitants the room has but two cats, two cats with collars of favors on their enormous necks, which they wear engraved in gold on the back

days), Madame du Deffand entertained at a large supper attended by the greatest names and greatest ladies of France. The bitterest enemies met here without "either attacking or avoiding each other": Madame d'Aiguillon, Madame de Mirepoix, the Marquis de Boufflers, Madame de Crussol, Madame de Bauffremont, Madame de Pont de Veyle, Madame de Grammont, the Choiseuls, the Duchesses de Villeroi, d'Aiguillon, de Chabillant, de la Vallière, de Luxembourg, de Lauzun, the Président Hénault, Monsieur de Gontaut, Monsieur de Satinville, Monsieur de Guines, the Prince de Bauffremont. And in the course of the year, Madame du Deffand held an even greater reception, her New Year's Eve supper, when she gave all her friends the pleasure of hearing Midnight Mass and Balbatre's music from a platform opening out from one of her rooms onto the church of Saint Joseph. This *salon* of Madame du Deffand's, where Clairon recited the rôles of Agrippine and Phèdre, teemed with news and literary questions. It took its tone and tastes from its mistress; the book of the day, the new play, pamphlet or philosophical treatise was judged there in the course of the conversation, read, so to speak, at finger's end, by this great eighteenth century society which could enter into everything. The great world came here to converse, to rhyme, to hear a song, or to say its say, in a style always vivid and original, on the success and the great man of the moment. For the particular character of Madame du Deffand's salon was that it formed the *bureau d'esprit* of the nobility. It was closed to artists; it welcomed only men of letters belonging to, or at least imposing themselves upon, the highest society; it united almost exclusively all that intelligent and charming public of letters, the men and women of the Court, who escaped from Madame Geofrin and resisted the advances of her hospitality, the comforts of her little suppers and the quadrilles she imagined in order to attract to her house, through the charm and

of the books possessed by the Marquise." (The Art of the Eighteenth Century, by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, 1874, vol. II.)

facilities of a *partie carrée*, the celebrated people that she could not have.

Whatever social consideration, indeed whatever power over public opinion the company of litterateurs could attribute in this age was clearly and prodigiously illustrated in another *salon*, Madame Geoffrin's, the *salon* of the Encyclopaedia. Through the welcome it gave to all literature, a bourgeois *salon* rose to the first rank of Parisian *salons* and became an intellectual center, a tribunal of taste where Europe came to receive its orders and whence the entire world received the fashion of French letters. A woman of undistinguished birth, the untitled wife of a glass manufacturer, with an income of no more than forty thousand pounds, made a favor, indeed, almost a grace, of her invitations, and an honor which confused the least timid (even Piron himself) of a presentation at her house—and this to sup most often, Marmontel says, of an omelet, a chicken and a dish of spinach. An old woman with a gracious smile, a mind natural, exact and subtle, whose malice had a rustic turn; an art of playing on her guest as on an instrument and drawing out every sound; a polite and thoroughly discreet egotism, a preoccupation for causing and creating pleasure which pursued her to her death-bed; a head well-stocked with opinions and comparisons of which she possessed, she said “a store for the rest of her days”; a great gayety when she spoke; a vanity so turned as to be without pretension; a knowledge of the world drawn from observation rather than reading; an amiable and never foolish ignorance; a heart that was a kindly boor; opinions supple and pliant enough under contradiction; a very slight esteem, or rather a very cold and very polished contempt for humanity—such was the assemblage of vices, of virtues, of attractions, of defects and of qualities to which Madame Geoffrin owed, if not her charm, leastways her fortune and the reputation of her *salon*.¹

¹Walpole doubtless left the most lifelike portrait of this illustrious *bourgeoise*. “Madame Geoffrin is an extraordinary woman. She possesses

Her house attracted people, much as she herself did, not by its beauty but by its neatness, order and cleanliness, by every sort of comfort, by a certain hidden tone and a masked, simple, almost naked elegance. Everything in it was accommodating, including her husband, who effaced himself through politeness all his life long, and who with the best grace in the world suffered himself to be reduced to the rôle of steward and figurehead. This house and this woman gathered all the survivors of Madame de Tencin's *salon*. Madame Geoffrin devoted all her evenings to her *beaux esprits* and to the litterateurs who had followed in their wake. On Wednesdays, she assembled the world of letters at a large dinner. On Mondays, her big dinner was in honor of artists. All the men of talent, excluded from the *salons* of fashion and barely admitted to a few *salons* of the financial world, thronged to Madame de Geoffrin's. She made them work, she visited them in their studios. Vanloo, Greuze, Vernet, Vien, Lagrénée and Robert arrived, and Madame Geoffrin took their votes on some old picture brought to her *salon* and coveted by some amateur; or else it was a fine drawing of the old schools, brought out of his portfolio by Mariette, and passing from hand to hand, amidst exclamations of comment and admiration. Sometimes Caylus told a graceful anecdote and, if the company found pleasure in his narrative, he amused himself by having the subject engraved for all the Monday habitués. The Mondays and Wednesdays, the great artistic and

more common sense than I have ever encountered, an extreme promptness in discovering characters and plumbing them to their very depths, and a pencil which never failed to represent its subject, generally without flattery. In spite of her birth, and the absurd local prejudices against the nobility, she exacts and holds a real court and many attentions. She manages this through a thousand and one little maneuvers and through friendly services as well as through a frankness and severity that seem to be her only means of attracting a world of people to her house; for she never ceases to scold those she wishes to keep by her side. She has but little taste and less knowledge; but she pays her court to a small number of persons in order to enjoy the esteem necessary to her protégés. Her education was formed under the celebrated Madame de Tencin who advised her never to rebuff any man because, in the words of her teacher 'even if nine out of ten may not care a half-penny for you, the tenth might become a useful friend.'"

literary dinners, the receptions of Madame de Geoffrin would have proved the most beautiful of feasts; they would have offered the cordial communion of a free and joyous repast for all the minds and talents of the eighteenth century, had not the mistress of the house occasionally cast over them the chill of her soul and the chill of her reason, her warnings and the abrupt checks of a prudence hostile to passion and verve, her humor of scolding and her eternal and frigid approbation: "Ah, there's something good!"—a phrase which fell with a dead sweetness from the mouth of Madame Geoffrin on warmth of speech, on enthusiasm of thought, on the urge or the eloquence of conversation, and like a gust of wind extinguished everything.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was not rich enough to give dinners or suppers. She contended herself with having the only valet she possessed open the doors of a *salon* where, from five to nine o'clock, churchmen, courtiers, soldiers, foreigners of distinction, men of letters, and—led by d'Alembert—the army of the Encyclopedia assembled. They were a vast company that she had accustomed to climb her stairs every day, and, to receive it, she gave up theaters and the country, to which she almost never went. Nor did she fail, in case she went out, to announce a long time beforehand the furlough she had decided to take. At Madame Geoffrin's, the character of the lady of the house, her natural moderation and her crainitive timidities prevented the conversation from spreading over many subjects, from becoming daring and from bursting irrepressibly forth. The terror she had of being compromised or troubled in that selfish peace which was her choicest happiness and the object of all her cares; her aloofness from the rumors of passion and speech; the somewhat severe, often exaggerated police, carried on in her *salon* and under her orders by the Abbé Burigny; the menace of those scoldings she administered so lavishly from her chimney-corner; the discipline imposed by her person, tastes, and habits, held men and ideas, characters and expressions, in a certain constraint. The *salon* of

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse knew nothing of these embarrassments and restrictions; temperament was free there, and personalities enjoyed the right to be frank. No question was barred: religion, philosophy, morality, stories, news, slander of all the worlds, everything was discussed. An anecdote reached here still fresh, a system was exposed here while still alive; and people conversed with a liberty that only stopped short of indecency and gave Diderot's conversation a chance for expression.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was marvelously gifted for her rôle. A supremely clever woman, deep in her singularly affectionate soul, she found a politeness with lights and shades of interest for every one. She had a spirited, brilliant and rich nature; her inward flame kindled her personality; she possessed a lovely sense of humor and relished sudden flights of wit. She had a vast reading, constantly widened and strengthened by that universality of knowledge which furnishes its possessor with a reply to every question; and she was clever in effacing herself, giving free play and the place of honor to the intelligence of others. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse possessed the delicate, profound, amiable and considerate genius of the ideal mistress of the house; and no woman knew as well as she the trick of bringing stragglers back into the general conversation. Madame Geoffrin's was the official salon of the Encyclopedia; Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's *salon* was its intimate parlor, boudoir and laboratory. It was here that the party success was planned, that praise was conferred, that the opinions of the day were dictated to posterity, that a philosophical despotism grew, under which d'Alembert ended by curbing the Academy. So many were the places given out in this *salon*; so many were the great men invented there; such was the celebrity apportioned there by the passion of one woman, that its mistress earned the same glory and the same enemies as Madame Geoffrin.

The *salon* of Madame d'Epinaÿ, despite its relations, according to the Comte d'Allonville, did not belong to good

society. Little by little, it closed its doors upon the people of society who had at first frequented it, and became an Encyclopedist's salon where Madame d'Epinay would philosophize and coquette with her *bears*.

Another portico of the Encyclopedia was the *salon* Madame Marchais, held at the Tuileries, in the Pavillon de Flore, when she was not playing operas at Versailles by the side of her great friend, Madame de Pompadour, who enjoyed seeing her share her theatrical successes on the stages of her private apartments. This philosophical *salon* differed however from the other philosophical *salons* by a character, an interest and a personnel that were particular to it; it was, above all, the *salon* of the *produit net*. On the chimneys or tables, only pamphlets and economic questions were to be seen: *Letter from Turgot to the Abbé Terray*, *Dialogues of the Abbé Galiani on the Grains*. Madame Marchais had been converted by Madame de Pompadour to the science of her famous friend Quesnay; she had embraced the cause of the master with such devotion and she was so zealous in the interests of the party, that it was in her *salon* that it occurred to the Academy to propose the Eulogy of Sully, in which all the principles of Madame de Pompadour's economist received their opportunity for expression, their crowning and apotheosis. But amid this fine zeal Madame Marchais kept what saves a woman from pedantry; she retained pompons and folderols, under which books of study, lively sportiveness, imagination of wit, smiles and slander disappeared. Her amiability had not the slightest ink-stain at its fingertips. Gayly she mocked her great love of reading with an epigram: "I read everything that comes out, good or bad, like the man who said: 'What matter though I am bored so but I amuse myself?'"

From these readings she gathered a variety of new themes from every source to stimulate conversation ceaselessly, and a thousand anecdotes, which she told with an art of narrative so marvelous that it passed for the most perfect in Paris. She also possessed an enchanting politeness of tone;

she was ever attentive, she belonged to every one, she spoke to each individual; and the appropriateness, measure, fine shading and inevitable fitness of words seemed to come to her lips naturally according to the person and the moment. Furthermore, she attracted people to her by the virtues of her character and by the moral qualities that won her the honor of serving as a model for Thomas's painting of the *femme aimable* as the century dreamed her:—a woman who, while she drew all the charms of good company, taste, grace and wit from Society, was yet able to preserve her reason and heart against a cold vanity, a false sensibility or the passions of self-conceit, against so many affectations born of an exaggerated sense of society; a woman who, forced in spite of herself to adopt the conventions and customs of this world, could yet turn back towards nature, from time to time, to grant it a tribute of regret; a woman who, carried along by the general activity, could yet feel a need of repose and find that repose in friendship; a woman who, forced into expense and luxury through her very state, could yet distinguish useful expenses and associate the industrious exigents with her fortune; a woman who, amid so much lightness, could yet possess a strong character; a woman who, amid a crowd, could yet preserve a soul, and courage to make it speak.

Thomas, who was accustomed to praise, forgot only one feature of the portrait: Madame Marchais had enemies and deserved to have them; she had earned them. She was very witty, but ever so slightly malicious; her malice grew sharper in the company of Monsieur de Bièvre, who spent his life with her, of Laclos and of the terrible Marquis de Créqui. Except for this, she was warmly loved, much sought after and very popular. At her suppers (those magnificent suppers offering the most beautiful fruits of Paris, a gallant gift from Monsieur d'Angevilliers; they were picked in the king's gardens and caused Madame Marchais to be called Pomona) the court was present, the company of Madame Geoffrin, the company of Madame Necker,

the company of Madame du Deffand, and Madame du Deffand herself. It was in that *salon* on the night of the death of her friend Pont de Veyle, that these words of so splendid a naïveté were heard to escape Madame du Deffand: "Alas! he died this evening at six o'clock; otherwise you would not be seeing me here!"

Without being pretty, Madame Marchais, reputed to be the smallest and daintiest person in France, drew a thousand graces from her daintiness, from her elfin figure, from the dazzling mobility of her physiognomy, from the singular beauty of her hair, adorably shaded and falling to her feet.

A *salon* which had originally been the little drawing-room of Madame Marchais's guests began to grow at this period and soon it had absorbed everything. It had, at first, been held at the Marais, whither, according to the pleasantry of Diderot "the tender frog Suard" came sighing. Later it was transferred to the Hôtel Leblanc and still later to the house of the Comptroller-General. This *salon* followed the fortunes of its master, Monsieur Necker; and the wife of the minister made a sort of ministry of it.

Brought back from Geneva by the Maréchale d'Anville, placed with a sister of Madame Thélusson to supervise the education of her daughters, Madame Necker had remained a Genevan and a school-mistress. Hers were a courtesy without ease, grace of wit without abandon, pedantic graces of the heart; the great sentiments of a moral novel of the day on humanity; a methodical decency; a serious smile; and a virtue whose correctitude (and if we may say so whose purity) deprived it of warmth. By her side, Galiani sought his verve and did not find it; and the Abbé Morellet, of so ebullient a temperament, stopped short in the midst of his angers and his philosophical explosions. But this was the woman who crowned Marmontel; she made of hers the *salon* that originated the idea of the statue and the apotheosis of the living Voltaire. Moreover, Madame de Staël, her daughter, compensated for the chill of the house by her ardor, by her abundance of ideas, by all the daring of youth

and of living genius, free, natural and uttering the sound of a great heart in a great mind. Everything led to Madame Necker's salon, public opinion and literature, politics and poetry. While Necker's popularity arose from an entire nation, all of Society turned towards his wife, who, to all the rumor gathering about her name, added the reputation of her charities. This caused her house to be called: "*un bureau d'esprit et de commiseration.*"¹

As we descend from these great literary *salons* and true academies of public opinion to the secondary *bureaux d'esprit*, less famous and less reputed, enclosed within a narrower circle of habitués and influences, the first we meet is the *salon* of Madame de la Ferté-Imbault, the daughter of whom Madame Geoffroi was as astonished of being the mother as a hen who hatches a duck's egg. This light-hearted young woman, of an unquenchable gayety, of an immortal gayety, said Maupertuis, because it was founded upon nothing, had installed on the terrace of her house, her *country*, as she called it, a *bureau* or rather a *boudoir d'esprit* where wit seemed to play in the very breeze. Here people spoke only the giddiest words and the lightest epigrams, like those which fell upon the Maupeou ministry; and the mistress of the house threw out the sharpest of observations by handfuls in the air, directed against men of all sorts and especially against the philosophers seated at table and eating up her patrimony. Out of all this mocking spirit which she rallied and spread about her, Madame de la Ferté-Imbault had founded an Order, whose seal bore her effigy, an Order of which she was the Grand Master under the name of *Sovereign of the Incomparable Order of the Lanturelus, Protectress of all Bibbers, she-bibbers, and wee-bibbers.* This buffoonish order for a moment revived the great war

¹The dinners of Madame Necker, famous for their bad fare, took place every Friday. The erection of a statue of Voltaire, the execution of which was entrusted to Pigalle, came out of one of these dinners where the eighteen guests were: Diderot, Suard, Chastellux, Grimm, the Comte de Schomberg, Marmontel, d'Alembert, Thomas, Necker, Saint-Lambert, Saurin, Raynal, Helvétius, Bernard, the Abbés Arnaud and Morellet, the sculptor Pigalle.

of songs and the refrain of the Calotines, by inspiring a wit of the Maurepas salon to pen this ironic portrait of the Grand Mistress of the Lanturelus, of the Marquise Carillon:

Qui veut avoir trait pour trait
 De dame Imbault le portrait?
 Elle est brune, elle est bien faite,
 Et plait sans être coquette,
 Lampons, lampons, camarades, lampons!
 Sans doute elle a de l'esprit:
 Ecoutez ce qu'elle dit:
 Elle parle comme un livre
 Composé par un homme ivre:
 Lampons, lampons, camarades, lampons!
 Lampons! Lampons!

On certain days, Madame du Boccage gave suppers. But her *salon* resembled her cold, sad and unattractive politeness. It was a course of instruction serious to the point of boredom, conducted by political men, savants and a few men of letters on the new publications, presided over by Madame du Boccage's familiar, the Abbé Mably, who, at her house, pitilessly executed the books of Necker. There were the *salon* and the company of Madame de Fourqueux, enlivened by the mystifications of the famous Goys, playing the part and sex of the Chevalière d'Éon. The widow of a doctor of the Duc de Choiseul, Madame de Vernage, presided at a *salon* of litterateurs and philosophers in the Rue de Menars; she believed she had made it the first salon in Paris, because it was honored by the visits of the Archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne. There was the *salon* of the Comtesse Turpin: "Minerva when she meditates, Erato when she writes," said the poets of the time, a *salon* charmed by Voiseinon and filled with his friends. There were also the *salon* of a certain Madame Briffaut, daughter of a cook, married to a merchant knighted by Madame du Barry, cited as one of the most beautiful women of Paris, and who, to take on polish, had formed a company of writers, men of talent and artists; the *salon* of Madame Pannelier, who,

with her little literary coterie and her Wednesday dinners, tried to vie with the *bureaux d'esprit* of Madame de Beauharnais; the *salon* of Madame Élie de Beaumont, the woman author, who gave a supper every evening, the basis of whose company was the La Harpe couple; the *salon* of old Mademoiselle Quinault (who had retired from the Comédie Française in 1742 and who died at the age of eighty-three) that witty old woman, to whose *salon* d'Alembert, after the death of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and of Madame Geoffrin, finally transferred his habits and his familiar company. To these centers of art and literature, we must add the assemblies of men of letters held at Madame Suard's and at Madame Saurin's, after the play; and finally that *salon* where the people of the Court claimed they amused themselves better than at Versailles, the *salon* of the sister of a little writer, whom she was very busily occupied in making greater; that *bureau d'esprit*, the only one conducted by a young woman, the *salon* of Madame Lebrun, filled with authors and critics, and where the applause for Vigée's plays were first prepared.¹

One *salon* inherited the habitués and the influence of those two great *salons* closed by death, Madame Goeffrin's and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's, which d'Alembert tried for a moment to revive and to continue. But it was a vain enterprise which the philosopher soon abandoned, recognizing the correctness of Madame Necker's remark that "women fill the intervals of conversation and of life, as the cotton one introduces in cases of porcelain." These two great *salons* of letters and philosophy were succeeded by the *salon* of Madame la Comtesse de Beauharnais, the asylum of all the litterateurs embarrassed by the tone of reserve at the house of Necker. And in a short while the *salon* of that woman who knew neither jealousy nor slander, and was ever ready to praise, became the great *bureau*, the most

¹The comedy of "The Circle" had in 1764 lightly caricatured the familiars of this *salon* in its beginnings. The physician was Doctor Lorry, the Æsculapius of women of fashion; the musician, the Abbé de la Croix; the poet, the poetaster Durosoy.

accredited *bureau d'esprit* in Paris, where the courtiers of Madame de Beauharnais, her dyers, Dorat, Laus de Boissy and Cubières reigned, in turn, as masters of the house. During the years preceding the Revolution, all the republic of letters assembled at the Comtesse's and thronged to her Fridays, where conversation entertained the company until half-past eleven, the hour for supper. At midnight, they returned to the *salon*, where the hostess kept her guests until five o'clock. Readings of every nature and from all sorts of works, verse, tragedies, fragments of confessions and chapters of novels lasted until three o'clock. It was here Rétif de la Bretonne read the beginning of *Monsieur Nicolas*. Then all this company, animated and excited by these readings, began to discuss them, as after the first night of a play. Day broke upon them bandying news and anecdote; sending stories, escaped from secret diaries, from one end of the *salon* to the other; listening to the curious memories of the Marquis de Lagrange, and to the thousand and one anecdotes told by the hostess. From these, Rétif drew almost all the adventures of the *Posthumes*.

We have seen the woman of the eighteenth century, at the age of youth and pleasures, beginning to direct her graces, her genius and her singular aptitudes towards politics and ministerial favors. We have seen her imitating Madame de Prie, and, just as she, making "lovers and business progress as one." We have heard her say at each promotion or appointment: "Something must be done for this young colonel; I know his valor, I shall speak of it to the minister"; or else: "It is surprising that this young Abbé has been forgotten; he should be a Bishop; he is a man of gentle birth, and I would vouch for his manners." We have followed her in that patient and frenzied work of solicitation, protection and universal patronage, at Court, among ministers, mistresses and in Society. Finally we have shown the contemporary woman in her active rôle

of dominion which was to make of her sex the first power of the monarchy.

As soon as this woman grew old, as soon as she reached the age of forty, if she refused herself to religion, if the distractions of the *bel esprit*, the diversions of the imagination or the homage of letters seemed hollow and insufficient to her, she at once made public affairs the occupation and interest of her life, indeed, her whole life. The joys of youth, the beautiful passions of illusion and irresponsibility fell from her one by one; her zest for society abandoned her with the intoxication of love; so she turned to ambition and domination. Through her friends, her protégés, her liaisons and her counsels; through her ideas; through everything she inspired and impelled, she was determined to glide into power. She must needs intervene in government, have a hand in the novel of history, dip into the greatest adventures, by disposing of offices handle a part of the State; in a word, gamble for influence, power, fortune, and even glory with intrigue for stake.

At the beginning of the century there was a sort of patron and mistress of all women of intrigue in Madame Tencin, the arch-intriguer we have already mentioned. She lurked in the shadows, she was so definitely present in every move; granting audiences, receiving reports from her spies, attending the Councils of Ministers; endlessly dictating and writing memoranda, reports, and letters ten pages long; driving in her thoughts from all sides on every hand; furnishing Richelieu with a plan, a line of conduct, a consistent system; making of the courtier a personality, an instrument and a danger for Maurepas, the same Maurepas whom she touches to the quick in a phrase: "The navy collected fourteen millions this year and did not put a vessel to sea; here is where Maurepas must be attacked."

Below Madame de Tencin, in her wake, there were all sorts of great ladies, but with a genius neither so daring nor so broad, of a more practical turn of mind, more applied to profit. These women intrigued, not because intrigue was

the law of their characters, an activity of which they stood in need, the fever that upheld them and which gave them a sense of life, but because intrigue was a path and a means to an end. No less ardent but more grasping than Madame de Tencin, they proved indefatigable; they were prepared for anything, for marches and counter-marches; they were filled with combinations, eternally active and standing on hand to award offices and honors within their own families and to amass power and riches for their house. It seemed as though through their veins ran some of the blood of that family which allowed no one to die at night at Versailles without being at hand, awake at the hour, already drawing up its batteries, laying a hand on the spoils of the dead. Was not the old Maréchale de Noailles, née Bornonville, typical of them all? A woman who knew no scruples and who confessed having made use equally, almost indifferently, of confessor and mistress to gain the favor of princes and to advance the cause of her relatives? She had eleven daughters and ten sons; she had so many grandsons and great-grandsons, all of whom she pushed into the leading offices of the state, that she was frequently called the mother of the twelve tribes of Israel. When people said to her that her progeny would extend like the stars in the firmament, a sigh and, at times, this phrase escaped from the insatiable old Maréchale: "Ah! what would you say if you knew the golden opportunities I have missed!"

In time, this vocation of intrigue became the general vocation of women. It spread through society and descended to its lowest ranks. It ranged from women who were the counsel and inspiration of ministers down to women who were the mistresses of clerks in ministries. It began with a Princesse de Brionne to end with a nameless Princess of the theater. Only women of affairs were now to be seen, waiting in antechambers for an audience and dictating notes to secretaries for the next voyage of the Court. Beside their boudoir was a study. They reasoned, they made decisions,

they threw themselves into politics; they dreamed *essentially*, while tying knots, of the abuses of the government. They conversed with their company of the despatches they drew up every morning and of the means of information they had in offices. To believe them, never a minister but knew their handwriting, never a clerk but respected it. They spoke to one of the ideas they presented, that people opposed, that they discussed and forced through: and they took their leave of one to go to the work they must do with a personage whose influence was well known. The *Tableau du Siècle* drew a pretty caricature of the woman of intrigue in the manner of La Bruyère. "*Araminte* affects to go often to the minister's; she asks for private audience; you see her pass into his study with a paper in her hand, she emerges with a busy air which she would wish everyone to notice. Having returned home, orders are given to her porter to declare her at home only to all the people in *chaises* varnished by Martin, or in equipages bearing crests and attended by great liveries. Should you find *Araminte* alone, she would beg a thousand pardons for having kept you waiting a moment. How can a person cope with the piles of letters that rain down upon her from the ministries? On her mantelpiece you see a dozen letters, turned over, the seal showing; you recognize the crests of the greatest lords. 'You must be swamped with affairs,' says a plain man to her, with the best faith in the world. 'Ha, Sir, I cannot cope with it, I believe the entire Court has passed the word on to test my patience. Here are letters of endless length. It is true what they contain is of the merest consequence.' *Araminte's* brother, a Captain of Dragoons, arrives at this stage, and picks one of these letters. (It is an order for sweetmeats to be given to a little child.) 'Take care,' says the visitor to him, 'you will mix up some very important papers.' 'Pooh!' says the captain, 'these are answers to New Year's greetings.' "

This strange mania for affairs was depicted more seriously in another book, and personified in the *Baronne*

d'Ercy, a portrait in which the age wished to see Madame Cassini, the mistress of a salon "in the true tone of the court," light, scintillating and bantering, a woman who made ministers.

Pretty and charming in her elegance, Madame Cassini had laid the foundations of her reputation for gallantry and intrigue under Louis XV, by seeing ministers, generals and people of fashion, by working to place her creatures, by throwing discredit on the ministry, by uttering her blame or approbation on the operations of the government. Then, dreaming of higher flights, she had tried to be presented at court, only to be stopped by this phrase of Louis XV: "There are too many intriguers here, Madame Cassini will not be presented." But Louis XV was dying; and the star of Madame Cassini rose with the new reign. As Maillebois's mistress, she could open her lover's portfolios to her brother, Monsieur de Pezay, who found plans and memoranda of the Italian campaign of 1741. Out of these he made a book, the *Campaigns of Maillebois*, which gave him a seat at the tables of Society. Having accomplished this initial step, Madame Cassini helped her brother make a rich marriage. She further helped him, with more advantage to his purpose, to become the lover of the Princesse de Montbarrey. The Princesse led Madame de Maurepas where she willed; Madame de Maurepas ruled Monsieur de Maurepas; Monsieur de Maurepas ruled the King; thus to be the master of Madame de Montbarrey at the moment meant virtually to reign over France; so Monsieur de Maurepas called Monsieur de Pezay the King, the true King. But even more than this liaison, Madame Cassini's pretty *salon* in the Rue de Babylone gained its influence from a secret correspondence engineered by brother and sister, addressed to the young king to guide him in his inexperience. Accordingly, Pezay was the confidential correspondent and the intimate counselor of Louis XVI.¹

¹We possess the plans, cuts, designs of the hotel Cassini, executed by Bellissard in 1768. This album which, in its binding of primitive red

The results of this correspondence soon became evident; Terray was dismissed; Montbarrey became a director general of the war, and Pezay brought first Clugny, then Necker, into the office of Comptroller-General. But, having reached this point, the *salon* Cassini, whose ambition was growing apace, sought to hold a recognized position in the ministry; it attempted to upset Maurepas, and Maurepas won. Maillebois delivered Pezay's secret correspondence, which Madame Cassini had entrusted to him, and Pezay was exiled.

All that fortune and dream of intrigue crumbled; nothing remained, not even Madame Cassini's *salon*, ruined by political disgrace and presently discredited by scandal. Madame Cassini claimed from Monsieur Necker a pension of three thousand pounds, as sister of Monsieur de Pezay, the author of Necker's rise, threatening to publish Necker's letters proving what intrigue and the maneuvers he had employed to become minister, with the help of that "child destroyed by his politics."

Outside these three ends: devotion, the *bureaux d'esprit*, and intrigue at Court, there still remained one end for the old woman of the eighteenth century in her declining years. This was the effortless, untroubled and serene end of the woman who, at the age of forty-five, assumed the costume and spirit of her age, and, without breaking with the habit of her thoughts or the trend of her social and family relations, without stepping out of the framework of her life, set herself to living peacefully with old age as with a friend. Many an old woman gave herself up neither to devotions, nor to the *bel esprit*, nor to intrigue. These rare women,

morocco, is a curious and rare specimen of the albums which noblemen who built in the eighteenth century had executed of their dwellings. Next to a music-room, there is a charming semi-circular little *salon*, on the ceiling of which are painted Cupids, with delicate woodwork and great lampadaries. It is perhaps in this music-room that the performance of La Harpe's *The Nun* occurred in 1872, with Madame Cassini playing the rôle of Mélanie. As a result of this performance, La Harpe and Dorat, famous for their enmity, became publicly reconciled and embraced each other solemnly.

according to the expression of the age, "had had character and had not neglected to nurture their reason"; they escaped the necessity of finding themselves new positions; they were content to play, simply and for themselves, the part of the old woman,—the most perfect, and perhaps the most accomplished part of which eighteenth century has left us a memory and an example.

The way in which woman faced or rather welcomed old age was one of the greatest signs of the practical philosophy which had already supported her in marriage. Occasionally she resigned herself, without struggling against the advance of Time, with a singular ease and serenity, a gay courage and a light-hearted heroism, allowing no sigh, complaint or regret to escape her. The fine dream of her sex was ended; but she could still become "an amiable man" and find consolation in that. It was as though she had discovered, in the virtues of amiability, at the outset, the equanimity, the contented sanity of ideas and the appeasement of life that a sincere religion tries to provide between maturity of age and death. The old woman floated out of the *Mémoires* of the day and glided gently into the realm of History, as in the effaced flower of an old pastel, a figure of goodness and malice, smiling at the shadow of the years between Indulgence and Experience. She still bore her past in her eyes and on her lips; it gleamed in a ray from her heart, spared by the wrinkles of age: "Love has passed that way" said the Prince de Ligne as he saw her, in a sentence that says everything.

Indeed, did not the old women of this age seem to be the grandmothers of love? The *tonneau* in which they closed themselves in one corner of the apartment at the first cold of the season, reminded one of the *tonneau* shown in the engraving of the painter Lépicié's daughter, a wicker basket over the arms of which climb reeds and flowers. It was the confessional where youth came to seek charitable counsel, human morality, encouragement, succor and absolution. The old woman joined couples, she arranged en-

gagements, she found warmth herself, as she placed hands that sought each other in her own; and, bending over the tumult, song and passions of all the youth about her, she felt no bitterness, rancor or jealousy within her. She pardoned the present for living in its turn, the future for being younger than she; her youth returned to her in the youth of others, and the memory of this past, brought back by every voice she heard, served but to make her gladder in the joys of the world and kindlier toward its weaknesses. She moved to and fro, encouraging the gayety that came her way, celebrating the pleasure she brought to birth, paving the way for the tyro, lending the benevolence of her attention to all, loving gay talk, in a word, inspiring this world at all moments with a wave of her enchanted crutch, a true fairy's wand, whose handle, full of gold for the poor, sowed charity at its passage.

Those who had been the most beautiful and the most gallant, whose youth had known the greatest triumphs and tribulations, often accepted old age the most cheerfully and proved the most seductive in their new rôle. Accustomed to homage, they retained it through the charm of their relations, through their discretion, their ease and their attractiveness. Having abandoned love, they sought friends, considering that, at their age, it was, as they said, "a good speculation to have people adore one." To their knowledge of the world, they added the three qualities of the wit of society: dash, tact and taste. Their speech at once daring and wistful, caressing and virile, lent its seasoned freedom to conversation. These women were the mistresses of the *salons* of France; they presided over its conversation, they set its pace and gave it the swift impetus of their ideas and judgments, in a natural and always seemly accordance. By invisible bonds, by a thousand graces, by the charm of their gentle voices, of their maternal accents and of their smiling reason, they rallied and kept at woman's side that world of men which at the end of the century was to desert the realm of society for the realm of clubs. By the intel-

ligence which dwelled in them as a last coquetry, they reigned, governed and gave orders; they created reputations, they dictated judgments, they directed or excused ridicule. They accomplished more: they moderated the manners of good company and assigned their equilibrium and their mean between decency and squeamishness to them. They represented tolerant tradition and convention without prudery. They made order, they gave the tone and preserved the etiquette of fashions and manners in a society of which they were, according to the contemporary phrase, "the lieutenants of police," under the authority of that adorable dean, the Maréchale de Luxembourg.

We must pause for a moment before the portrait of the latter; for she was not merely an old woman, she was the old woman of the age; she personified, in its most agreeable expression, the old age of the eighteenth century. Nothing of her period was lacking in her; her youth almost went beyond frivolity, and songs about her former love still remained amid the faint echoes of the *salons*. Since then, she had put her house so well in order, she had forgotten her past with so much naturalness and ease, that the world about her forgot it as she did, and nobody took it upon himself to point out that her dignity was based simply upon grace. A piquant wit and an infallible taste had won her an authority in society that was respected, loved and feared. She pronounced judgment on all that touched society as a supreme court; she awarded people the personal consideration which opens or closes the doors of intimacy upon them or she deprived them of it; in a word, she had them admitted or not, to those little suppers, so much sought after, where only men of the *bel air* were suffered. She gave young women and young men the baptism of that decisive judgment which was from Paris to Versailles, something like the password of their figure or their wit. Without pedantry, indignation, or grandiloquence, she sat in judgment on people, on sentiments, on fatuity, on the polite tone, on presumptuous confidence and on everything that

offends delicacy, with epigrams and mockeries pleasant enough to be cited and to cling to the shoulders of whom she wished to punish or rail. Forcing women to a general coquetry, commanding men to consideration, she was the instructress of all the young Court, the great judge of all the wars of politeness, the supreme censor of French urbanity, amid an anglomania which was already spreading the fashion of its frock-coats and its crudities.

Tone—all lay therein for the *Maréchale*: it was man, it was woman herself. She judged it not only as a form but as a character, an exterior consciousness of the soul and of the sentiments. In her eyes, a bad tone betrayed a lack of delicacy; she was convinced that there was an exact correspondence between elegance of manners and elegance of thought, of the very heart. She kept the usages of society to the letter; but it was because, by dint of studying them and seeing them practiced, she had thought to discover in them a sense, an admirable good sense and subtlety. Penetrating to the core of the spirit of these usages, she had gathered such an idea of their moral value that she was not far from believing God found a certain pleasure in the fine manners of those who prayed to him. One day, at *l'Isle-Adam*, the ladies, waiting for the Mass of the Prince de Conti, laid their Books of Hours in the *salon* on a round table. Turning the pages as a pastime, Madame de Luxembourg stopped at two or three prayers and finding them in bad taste, began to criticize them mercilessly; and as a lady tried to defend the prayers, saying that it sufficed for a prayer to be said with sincerity, and that God assuredly paid no attention to what is called good or bad tone, "Well, Madame," said the *Maréchale* very quickly and seriously, "Pray do not believe that!" Do not the whole woman and also the ultimate superstition, no, the final religion of that polite society, lie in this sentence?

This aged fairy-godmother of politeness had an angel, as a staff in her old age; she rested with one hand on her cane, the other on the arm of a young woman who never

abandoned her and whom Society always saw by her side: a charming spectacle which seemed to show Wit upheld by Modesty! This young woman was the granddaughter of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, Madame de Lauzun, that accomplished creature who touched every heart with so sincere an emotion. Youth dwelled in her like a sweet sanctity. Naïveté, nobility, a dignified and attractive propriety, gave her glance and her physiognomy a celestial expression. Her words, her gestures, all her person, breathed a sort of virginal purity: it was as though, in passing, she exhaled the innocence of her soul. Living in society, living the life of society, she kept herself safe from all its attacks. Blushing at a glance, upset by a trifle, she pleased without coquetry; her charm was like that Innocence of which she seemed the imagined portrait.

All these women of the eighteenth century who knew how to grow old so well, displayed more than resignation; they displayed wit and taste. They not only lent themselves morally to this great change, by the patience of their dispositions, by giving up their pretensions and exactions, by their serenity and detachment, by the quietude of a sort of maternal indulgence; they also trained their bodies to the ways of old age, as they had trained their souls to its virtues. They knew how to make of their toilette the toilette of their years. Of all the coquetries of their past as women, they retained but one, the simplest and severest, cleanliness. Their cleanliness gave them at once an elegance and a dignity. From the very outset, at first sight, the quality they evidenced and their only paraded adornment were what that age called "*une netteté recherchée.*" By means of this constant appearance of neatness, by their careful attentions to the body (which they never missed for even a day, and from which nothing ever excused them, neither illness, suffering, nor infirmities) they escaped, if not the ravages, at least the ugliness and the horror of age: they surrendered to time, but without suffering its insults, they shook off the dust of the years. Their costume was the

simplest and the noblest. They excelled in putting a seemliness into each of its details, in the fashion of the wide-sleeved dress and in materials of an austere color. A single luxury heightened the inconspicuousness of this costume: namely, the plainest and choicest of linen. It was thus the old woman dressed; she displayed that singular understanding of her dress and that perfect sobriety of taste that Diderot admired one day at Grandval, when, after a game of piquet, his eyes fell on Madame Geoffrin. Even illness rarely made her miss her rigorous, self-imposed duty of being agreeable in simplicity and perfectly correct in cleanliness. Until the end, every well-bred woman kept the decency of old age and some of them even rose heroically from their death-beds to make a light toilet, as though they feared to disgust Death.

CHAPTER XII

THE PHILOSOPHY AND DEATH OF WOMAN

ON SOUNDING THE soul of the woman of the eighteenth century to the depths and challenging it for its principle, we discover that its law, the perceptible rule of the conscience of her sex, is not a religious law, a divine law, a law consecrated by faith. Rather, it is the absolute and essential human law which the woman of the day calls "a little philosophy," in other words a plan of conduct preceding her actions, a design within which she must attempt to enclose her life lest she move forward at hazard, a mode of making the best of reason for the sake of personal happiness.

That philosophy, created by woman herself against her need, as well as for her excuse, finds its alpha and omega, its goal and its end in the pursuit of happiness. Simple in formula, easy in practice, legitimizing woman's every natural aspiration, it exacts of her only a moderation of her egotism and the sacrifice of excesses. The highest point of perfection this epicurean wisdom may reach lies in the conviction that happiness alone matters; its repeated recommendation and the method of progress it indicates are indulgence in none but pleasant sensations and sentiments. Of course this wisdom includes love of virtue, but not because it is virtue, not for virtue's own sake; on the contrary, solely because it is one kind of sobriety essential to happiness. It postulates an easy conscience, but solely in the name of personal self-satisfaction, for the same reason that one must be lodged comfortably at home. From beginning to end, in precept upon precept, it is a doctrine that relishes ease and looks for moral comforts; it is a régime

without rigor, resembling a mild and pleasant hygiene of the soul, without other aim than to hold heart and soul quiet in a plate, and in four great conditions of internal health, of spiritual plenitude and of physical satisfaction: to be rid of prejudices, that is, of opinion received without examination; to be virtuous; to demean oneself well; to have tastes and passions, to be susceptible of illusion. Here are the four "*grandes machines*" of the happiness of woman, which Madame du Châtelet in her *Treatise of Happiness* represents as practically the four duties of woman's life.

This philosophy, which suffocated all the generous appetites of woman, limited her soul on all sides and lowered all the sensations of her heart, was followed by a philosophy which was truly to uphold and to console woman in irreligion, and to provide her with a moral prop in the midst of skepticism. By observing others, by observing herself, from a sort of examination of conscience conducted sincerely and ingenuously, woman derives the idea and will to happiness, but by improvement of self. With the help of that single revelation, namely the sense of duty, she broadens the picture of virtue, its action and its practice: from duties towards herself, she soars to duties towards others. By developing her confused notions of humanity, by widening their scope and establishing them, she creates for herself an ineluctable obligation of justice towards all men. Justice becomes in her a charity. She forces herself to be indulgent towards every fault whose principle is not vicious, and to respect every defect which can harm no one. By every means at her disposal, by every maxim, she inclines towards gentleness, towards goodness, towards charm, towards facility, towards equality of humor, towards that peace one radiates who governs his reason absolutely. To perfect one's reason in order to assure one's peace of mind; to acquire the courage of patience in order to diminish by half the ills of life; to exalt one's soul; to spread its kindness,—such are the inner joys, superior to circumstances, and independent of men, which this feminine philosophy,

at once so pure and tender, sets as its goal and accomplishes. When we read the book which formulates this plan of wisdom, the *Confessions* of Madame de Fourqueux, *née* Monthon, we do not find this beautiful dream of perfection crowned by faith. God is absent from this great moral lesson, which names Him but once to attest that it does not fear Him. "When one has studied to know one's duty toward one's neighbor, when one learns only in order to put one's learning into practice; when one has become just toward oneself and kindly towards others, one need have no apprehensions of the judgments of God." God was not only a word, He was an idea this philosophy lacked. It is only after she has discovered all the main principles and all the noblest precepts of this philosophy in herself, that we find Madame de Fourqueux taking up her book again after nine years' interval to announce that, in the interim, she has acquired faith in a God.

Certain souls in the eighteenth century appear so beautiful, so lofty, and so engaging that they might well be the smile and radiance of that philosophy. A few women arise who are all reason, all wisdom and all grace; their charm attracts about them a sort of veneration. They seem to have received all the virtues they have acquired, so thoroughly do they bear them without pride and without effort. They lend themselves to the world and they take pleasure in themselves. They are as indulgent towards the troubles of others as to their own troubles. Resignation to misfortune, sensibility, charity, justice and purity are joined in them to every correctness of expression and thought, to every charm as well as every dignity of the heart. Their souls, in every circumstance and without ever giving themselves the lie, resemble the fine picture they imagine of virtue. "She reveals nothing because she does not think she possesses anything to take pride in, she conceals nothing because she is true." And these elect creatures, who bear as it were a worldly sanctity, possess no shred of religion.

They follow the commandments of the Scripture to the letter: they practice Truth in Charity, ingenuously, fearing nothing, expecting nothing, hoping for nothing, asking nothing, praying for nothing. God is absent from them, and in their merits they do without Him. All their religion is only a morality; and their morality, which they simplify so as to have it at hand, reduces itself to this sole precept, this "vast and great precept": "Do not unto others as you would not they do unto you."

No mother formed their character; their education was negligible; it is through personal aspiration and through a natural urge that they rise to intuition, to taste, to a passion for goodness and justice. They maintain themselves on the high level of their hearts, without succor, by their own particular strength. They have no more recourse to philosophers or to rational theology than to religion: all they call the "balderdash of books and treatises" is useless to them. Free from all dogma and system, they find their lights, as well as their resources, deep in their own hearts. Thus these admirable and spotless souls, personified in an angelic type, Madame la Duchesse de Choiseul, cause to explode in the eighteenth century a virtue which finds goal, recompense, and nourishment in itself; thus several women in this century of frivolity offer the noble spectacle of a balanced conscience in the void, a spectacle forgotten of humanity since the Antonines.

This philosophy, without system or pride; gives the woman of the eighteenth century more than gayety, it gives her contentment. Not only does it uphold her before the misfortunes of life: it seems further to strengthen her against death, and to arm her with an easy patience before its terror. In the course of the century we see women going to their deaths gently and without rebellion; we see them investing their deaths with an easy grace and leaving the world as discreetly as they would a *salon* filled with people, where they would interrupt nothing. Woman in this age is more than resigned, she is polite towards death.

For one Présidente d'Aligre, who through fear intoxicates her agony, how many women in all conditions, among them the happiest and those most crowned with grandeur, quit life with calm, with seemliness, with splendid firmness and admirable courage! "I mourn my death" said one of them simply, as she departed from earth. There are some of them who, to the very end, clasp the hands of their friends and whose death seems but a final weakness. Others surround themselves with people, as they die, desiring the rumors of a game of loto at their bedside to cover the sound of their last sigh. Those who in their last hours do not remain faithful to their lives, to their principles, to their rank, to their very lack of faith, are so few as to be counted!¹

In answer to the chambermaid's query concerning the last sacrament, "Madame la Duchesse, *le bon Dieu* is there, will you allow Him to be admitted? He would wish the honor of administering to you," some women find strength to rise in their beds as for the visit of a King, others still have enough will-power to send away a God of whom they have no need. Women about to die call their cook, they advise him to cook well, lest their company abandon their table. They fill the long days of a lingering illness by writing a will (in which they do not forget a single individual among their relatives, their friends, their acquaintances, their poor) a masterpiece of clarity, a marvel of proportional calculation. Others crown their end with diadems of flowers, enliven it with dances or comedies, grace it with supreme loves; others rhyme their epitaphs and gayly bury their memory. Some, a few hours before dying, compose

¹ Consider in the delicate notice entitled *Life of the Princesse de Poix, née Beauvau, by the Vicomtesse de Noailles (Lahure, 1855)*, so precious as the expression of a society no longer extant, the accurate note on the ultimate attitude of the women of the age given by the recital of the death of Madame de Beauvau. "This venerable lady ended her life without pain or agony; she went out as she had lived, adoring her husband and honoring Voltaire. Her last moments were of a wholly philosophical peace. Religious ceremonies held no place here, but appearances were so happily kept that it might be said, to the last day of her life, that independence of ideas was united in her with observance of forms. . . ."

satiric couplets, others hold audience at the threshold of death, singing songs to the tune of Joconde. This is the century where the death-agony, going beyond unconcern, rises to epigram, where a princess about to die calls her physicians, her confessor and her steward to her bedside and says to the physicians: "Gentlemen, you have killed me, but it is by following your rules and principles"; and to her confessor: "You have done your duty by causing me a great terror"; and to her steward: "You find yourself here at the solicitation of my people, who wish me to make my will; you are all of you playing your parts very well but you must grant I am not playing mine badly either." The soul of woman goes to death bedecked with wit, just as the body of the Princesse de Talmont goes under ground clad in a blue and silver dress.

And yet Death is very much the unexpected guest in the eighteenth century. Life scarcely has time to think of it. The whirlwind of society, the din of feasts, the intoxication of movement, the frivolity and enchantment of the moment, the distraction of the day, an absolute and almost exclusive enjoyment of the present, efface its image and almost all consciousness of it from the soul of woman. Death but crosses her heart as the idea of the morrow flits across a supper-table. It no longer occupies the attention or preoccupies the imagination of this world. This society at whose door Death knocks unexpectedly is the contrary of the societies which lived in its shadow and communed familiarly with its terror. In the eighteenth century, Death seems to be absent and out of reckoning. Everything repulses, conceals and swathes it in oblivion. In this age the face of Death barely ventures in a church, in a tomb, where contemporary art gilds the skeleton.


During the entire century woman vigorously dispels the notion of her end. She escapes from it gently, she wards it off; one might imagine she fears lest it skim the surface of her charm. With what a gesture of repugnance, of almost ancient modesty, she draws back her hand as soon as

she touches it in its foulness! "Could we vanish in smoke, such destruction would not be displeasing to me. But I do not relish burial. . . . Ah, fie, fie! Let us speak of something else!" writes Madame du Deffand in a letter to Madame de Choiseul. This aversion to death is found everywhere, in everything woman writes. Putrefaction frightens her elegance. Ordure terrorizes her in the Infinite.

And it is not only philosophical women who evade this presence of death, born of the thought of death: the religion of the age forbids it to woman, as though fearing it might impair her fervor. The most devout of women, those who give the example and the law, eliminate meditation on death from their duties; they are unwilling to share in its sorrows; they divert their faith and the faith of others from its fearful warning and its heart-breaking lesson. Thus Madame de Lambert, in her most delicate accents, expresses the thoughts of the contemporary Christian on the notion of Death, when she writes these lines in the middle of her treatise on Old Age:

"The idea of the last act is always melancholy; however beautiful be the comedy, the curtain falls; the most beautiful lives come to an end, one and all, alike; earth is thrown over them and so it goes for all eternity. . . ."

Date Due

MAY 16 '60			
SEP 18 '61			
OCT 23 '62			
NOV 7 '62			
DEC 7 '63			
JAN 26 '65			
FEB 19 '66			
JY 22 '67			
MR 12 '68			
OC 16 '69			
OC 30 '69			
NO 13 '69			
MP 19 '70			
AP 5 '76			
NO 26 '79			
	PRINTED	IN U. S. A.	

396
G58
tL4

Goncourt, E. L.
The woman of the eight-
eenth century

DATE	ISSUED TO
MR 12 '68	<i>P. Walsh</i> L 308

396
G58
tL4

38 11 11

